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WORLD SOCCER®

essential football magazine

FERENC PUSKAS TRIBUTES TO A LEGEND

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

FABIO CANNAVARO

PLUS LIONEL MESSI, MARCELLO LIPPI & BARCELONA STAR IN OUR

2006 REVIEW

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comment

WE DON'T NORMALLY have to wait long for Sepp Blatter to put his foot in it. In the past month, the FIFA president has presented us with a couple of gems. First, the claim that South Africa will be ready to host the 2010 World Cup (despite all the evidence to the contrary); second, the suggestion that the European club calendar should be rescheduled to run from February to November.

It was a stupid proposal, of course – when would such trifles as the World Cup and continental championships be held? – and it has not been taken seriously by the clubs. But the timing of Blatter's comments was crucial. The interview with our ESM colleagues *Kicker* in which the remarks appeared was published in Germany on the day before FIFA's most recent executive committee meeting. The most controversial matter to arise from the Zurich get-together was the news – surprise! – that FIFA will not be disciplining vice-president Jack Warner for his role in the alleged resale of World Cup tickets, a story we reported in the November issue.

So there was method in Blatter's madness after all. Instead of reports of Warner merely being ticked off by the executive committee, we got a flurry of reports and comment pieces reacting to Blatter's latest wheeze on the international calendar. Whether Blatter was put up to it by his spin doctors or did it of his own volition is not important. But what is undeniable is that FIFA is being run by a president and an inner cabal of advisors who would rather peddle stupid ideas to the public than see one of their closest supporters landed in hot water.

Blatter insists the matter is now closed. But the handling of the Warner ticket scandal speaks volumes for the way in which FIFA is now run. The executive committee "expressed its disapproval" of Warner – that's about as harsh as punishment gets in Blatterland, where the "friends of Sepp" appear to be able to do as they please, without fear of getting caught, let alone punished. But the issue of corruption within FIFA is not going to disappear. The case of ISL and alleged bribery payments continues to rumble on, with further revelations likely in the future. Watch this space!

This month, our annual awards have been overshadowed by the death of Ferenc Puskas. Football in his native Hungary is now in a sorry state (see Dispatches, page 22) but he leaves plenty of wonderful memories for the world. Puskas finished seventh in our 1999 poll to find the greatest player of all time, behind Pele, Diego Maradona, Johan Cruyff, Franz Beckenbauer, Michel Platini and Alfredo Di Stefano, and ahead of George Best, Marco Van Basten and Eusebio. Exalted company, indeed, but Puskas deserves his place among the true greats of the game.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

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UNITED STATES: MLS has tweaked its strict salary rules to allow clubs to sign big-name foreign players. **Page 18**

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MAGICAL MAJOR
HUNGARY: Tributes were paid to Ferenc Puskas, the country's greatest player, who died aged 79. **Pages 6 & 22**

RESTAURATEUR CLAIMS HE COOKED TITLE CLINCHER
TURKEY: A restaurateur and part-time journalist has claimed he bribed Samsunspor to throw their home game with Fenerbahce on the final day of the 2000-01 season to ensure the latter won the title. **Page 56**

LITTLE-KNOWN TEEN NAMED ASIA'S BEST
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Teenage Qatari striker Khalfan Ibrahim was the shock winner of the Asian Player of the Year award as the continent's leading individual honour continued to be clouded in controversy. **Page 62**

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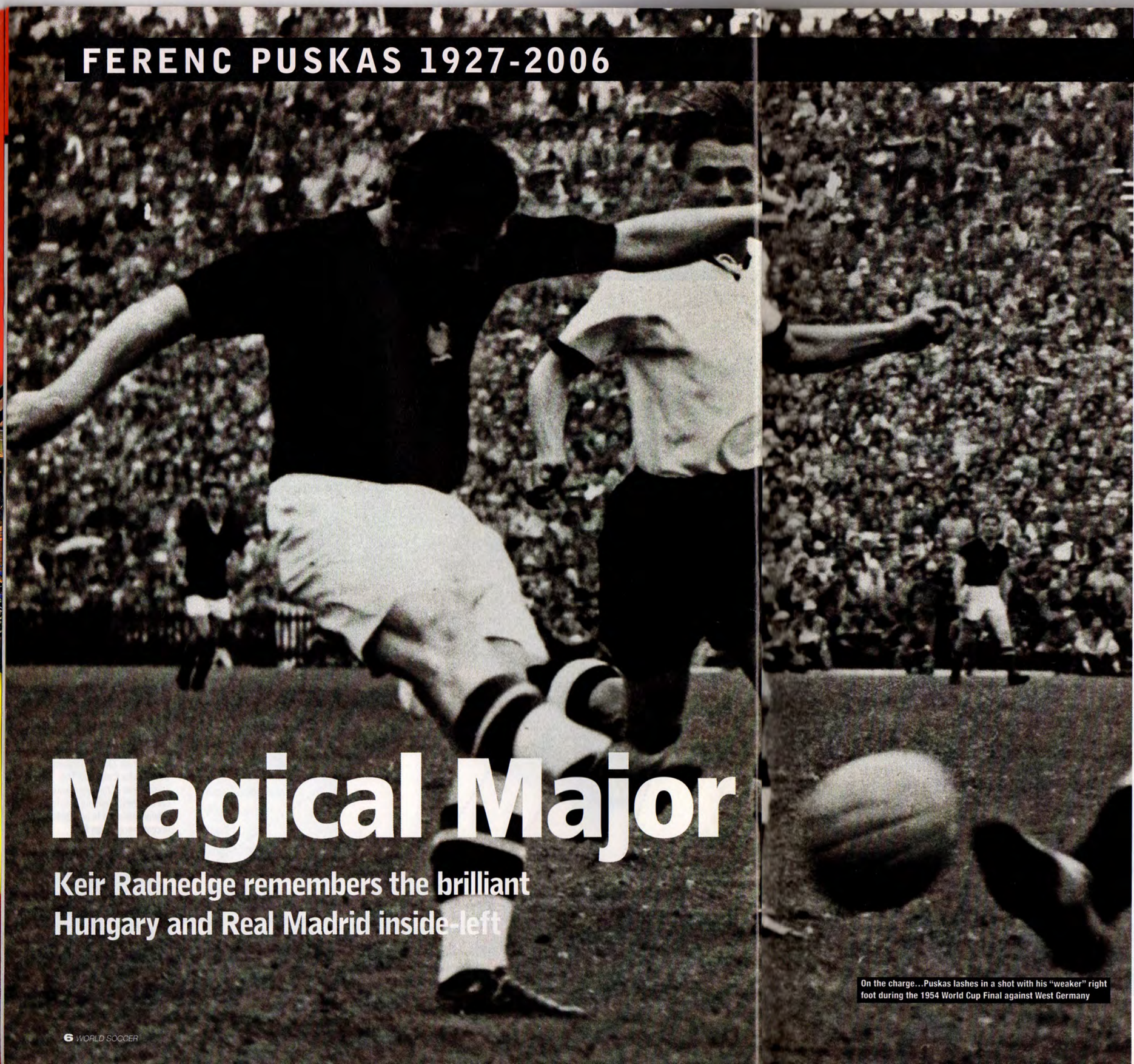


Magical Major

Keir Radnedge remembers the brilliant Hungary and Real Madrid inside-left

On the charge...Puskas lashes in a shot with his "weaker" right foot during the 1954 World Cup Final against West Germany

ITALY'S PLAYERS HAVE been told they will receive around £150,000 each for winning the World Cup; simultaneously, Real Madrid have been wondering whether to offer David Beckham several million pounds to extend his contract for another two years – and various sponsors are waiting in line to double or treble his income depending on which way he jumps.

By contrast, a player from another era has just died after living out his twilight years entirely unaware that he was once far greater than any of the triumphant *Azzurri* or England's one-time captain.

Ferenc Puskas will always remain the symbol of the legendary "Magical Magyars" who dominated European football in the early 1950s and the Real Madrid team who set new standards for football purity and inspiration in the late 50s and early 60s.

Alzheimer's disease controlled the last six years of his life. He could remember his devoted wife and daughter but very little, if anything, of his football career. "Each time, he is not as well as before, and each time his mind has moved further away," said Jose Santamaria, a Madrid team-mate, after his most recent visit to see Puskas in Budapest.

A testimonial match between Hungary and Madrid in August 2005 raised pitifully little cash towards the care that Puskas needed. Three months ago he was admitted to the intensive care unit of a Budapest hospital, rallied briefly, but died on November 17, aged 79, in the city where he learned his football.

'At 16 he terrorised goalkeepers with the power of his shooting'

Puskas' father was a player and later coach with Budapest club Kispest. By the age of 16, Ferenc was the team's regular inside-left, terrorising opposing goalkeepers with the power of his shooting. He rarely used his right foot but then his left was so lethal he seldom needed to. By 18 he was also in the national team.

Puskas' rise to prominence was aided by the decision, in 1948, of the newly-empowered communist government sports ministry to convert Kispest into Honved, an army sports club. Honved would, in due course, provide the foundation of one of the greatest national teams the world has seen.

The modern era of colour television has devalued its older heroes but that development cannot be allowed to go unchallenged – which is why it is crucial that today's generation of fans understand the story of Hungarian football in general and of Puskas in particular.

For four years Hungary, built around keeper Gyula Grosics, right-half Jozsef Bozsik and the inside-forward trio of Sandor Kocsis, Nandor Hidegkuti and Puskas, the captain, crushed all opposition. They also introduced a new tactical concept. Kocsis and Puskas

formed the attack's spearhead, with Hidegkuti a revolutionary deep-lying centre-forward.

Hungary won the 1952 Olympic title – Puskas scored in the 2-0 Final defeat of Yugoslavia – and ended England's home unbeaten record against continental opposition with a stunning 6-3 triumph at Wembley in November 1953. Early the following year, Hungary thrashed England again, 7-1 in Budapest.

No wonder they were overwhelming favourites to win the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland. But Puskas presented a problem. He was injured in a group game against West Germany and was a hobbling spectator at training before the Final, against the West Germans, in Berne.

Could his great left foot withstand the strain? Puskas thought so, and he and manager Guzstav Sebes decided he should play, thus taking one of the most controversial gambles in the game's history. After only 12 minutes the gamble appeared to be paying off when Hungary led 2-0. However, they lost 3-2 after Puskas had a late "equaliser" ruled out for offside.

Sebes was psychologically devastated by the defeat, his depression exacerbated by the accusations that he had been complacent in picking Puskas "merely to carry off the World Cup".

Puskas' Hungary played 28 more matches after Berne, winning 20, drawing five and losing three; they scored 97 goals and conceded 41. Puskas played in 26 of those games and scored 13 goals. The last of his 83 goals for his country was the first in a 2-0 win over Austria in Vienna on October 14, 1956, which also proved to be the last of his 84 games in the cherry red.

Defection to the West

Puskas returned to international football six years later. But, by then, at the World Cup in Chile in 1962, his trusty left foot was doing duty for Spain, because he had defected to the West, joining Real Madrid.

In November 1956 Honved's players obtained special government permission to travel abroad to play the first leg of their European Cup tie against Athletic Bilbao. While they were away, the failed Hungarian uprising took place in Budapest.

Honved's players decided not to go back and, instead, arranged for the second leg to be played in Brussels. But everything went wrong. The weather was freezing and, early on, keeper Lajos Farago was injured. Substitutes not being permitted, left-winger Zoltan Czibor had to go in goal, and the 10 men could only draw what proved to be their last competitive game together, 3-3.

Elimination left Honved in limbo. The players summoned their wives and children from Budapest and organised fundraising friendlies in Italy, Portugal and Spain, though the Hungarian federation tried to block them through FIFA at every turn. The players

Trophies but no cabinet...by 1960 Puskas had accumulated plenty of silverware

Champion...Puskas hails Madrid's Euro triumphs and, below, leads out Hungary against England in 1953

'He and Di Stefano proved one of the great partnerships'

even took their circus to Brazil. But back in Europe reality cut in. An agonised meeting ended with half the team voting to go home while the rest decided to try to find clubs and build new lives in western Europe – most notably Puskas, Kocsis and Czibor.

The latter two joined Barcelona, while Puskas went to Italy, but various clubs, Internazionale included, thought him too old and fat. How wrong they were.

Once at Madrid, Puskas developed a new career to emulate his first in brilliance. His saviour here was Emil Ostreicher, who had been technical director at Honved and who persuaded president Santiago Bernabeu and treasurer Raimundo Saporta that Puskas could reinvent himself.

Argentinian coach Luis Carniglia was more sceptical. Puskas scored a crucial penalty winner against neighbours Atletico in the 1958-59 European Cup semi-finals to put Real into their fourth successive Final. But a week before the clash with Reims in Stuttgart, he tweaked a muscle in a Spanish cup tie against Sevilla. So, for all his magnificent 21 goals in 24 league games, he was left out.

Perhaps the notably superstitious Carniglia did not want to risk making the same mistake Hungary had in Berne – or perhaps he had other sympathies. While Puskas stayed in the stands, Carniglia's compatriot Hector Rial played. Gabriel Hanot, editor of French sports paper *L'Equipe*, noted caustically: "It's a safe bet that if Rial had been Hungarian and Puskas Argentinian then Madrid's line-up would have looked somewhat different." In the event it did not matter as Madrid won comfortably, 2-0.

Puskas was the Spanish League's top scorer four times, and his partnership with Alfredo Di Stefano – another Argentinian, of course – proved one of the greatest of all time. They hit perfection together on the May night in 1960 when Madrid thrashed Eintracht Frankfurt 7-3 in the European Cup Final before a record 135,000 crowd at Hampden. Puskas scored four goals, Di Stefano three.

By now the Spanish fans loved him. In his Honved days, Puskas had been known by his English admirers as the Galloping Major; his Spanish worshippers nicknamed him *Canoncito Pum* – the booming cannon.

Puskas scored another hat-trick in the 1962 European Cup Final against Benfica in Amsterdam, only to finish on the losing side. He returned to Wembley a year later in the FIFA team for the match to celebrate the centenary of the Football Association; and was back in England one last time in 1965 to score two superb goals in the Stanley Matthews farewell match at Stoke.

A year later he retired, after a season of cameo appearances largely in Madrid's lucrative friendlies. His club grand total was 512 goals in 528 games.

Power game... Di Stefano looks on as Puskas shows why Spanish fans nicknamed him *Canoncito Pum*, the booming cannon

Puskas had various business investments, including a sausage factory near Madrid, but they did not provide him with long-term security. He also tried coaching without much success – save for the remarkable 1970-71 season when he took Panathinaikos to the European Cup Final.

In all those years Puskas, as a political exile, never dared return to Hungary. When Madrid played there, he did not travel. But eventually he was given assurances that he could visit in safety, making his first return in 1981. He was overwhelmed by the welcome he received and nine years later made Budapest his home again. The city's Nep stadium was renamed in his honour.

THE TRIBUTES

RAMON CALDERON

(Real Madrid president)

"The Madridista family feel a profound sadness for the loss of one of their greatest legends. He had many friends and was a man liked by everyone, admired as a professional and a person. He was one of our childhood heroes."

ALFREDO DI STEFANO

(Real Madrid)

"Today I have lost a friend. Puskas was one of the best players of all time."

JENO BUZANSZKY

(Hungary team-mate)

"We have lost our country's greatest ever sportsman."

FERENC GYURCSANY

(Hungarian Prime Minister)

"There is not one Hungarian who has been left untouched by the death of Ferenc Puskas, the best-known Hungarian of the 20th century."

TOM FINNEY

(England)

"He was one of the greatest players I ever saw... and a humble sort of person."

● 12/11/06

Sand man…Sidney enjoys scoring for Brazil in the 4-1 Beach Soccer World Cup Final win against Uruguay

● 12/11/06

Major success…Houston Dynamo players rush to celebrate their penalty shoot-out victory over New England Revolution in the MLS play-off Final

● 15/11/06

Goal-bound…Wayne Rooney puts England ahead in the 1-1 friendly draw against Holland in Amsterdam

● 15/11/06

Shake on it…Brazilian teenager Marcelo is welcomed to Real Madrid by president Ramon Calderon

● 18/11/06

Battle…Syria (in white) take on Singapore in the Asian Games football tournament in Doha, Qatar

HEADLINERS

EGGERT MAGNUSSON & BJORGOLFUR GUDMUNDSSON

West Ham's new Icelandic owners

WHEN NEWS FIRST broke that a consortium headed by Icelandic FA president Eggert Magnusson was about to bid for control of West Ham, reaction from press and public in both countries ranged from puzzlement to incredulity.

While enthusiasm for the English game in Iceland is high, a six-year flirtation with Stoke City ended this year leaving investors badly burned.

However, when it emerged the West Ham project's principal backer was Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson, chairman of the National Bank of Iceland and one of the country's wealthiest men, surprise gave way to a growing belief that the pair might just pull it off.

Magnusson became FA president in 1989 after a spell at the helm of Reykjavik club Valur, and has sat on UEFA's executive committee as well as FIFA committees. His personal wealth, though modest in comparison with Gudmundsson's, stems from the sale of his family's biscuit business. He is also on the board of two of Iceland's largest investment funds. Magnusson was a useful player and, at 59, still enjoys regular five-a-side games. He was a die-hard Tottenham fan until his arrival at Upton Park.

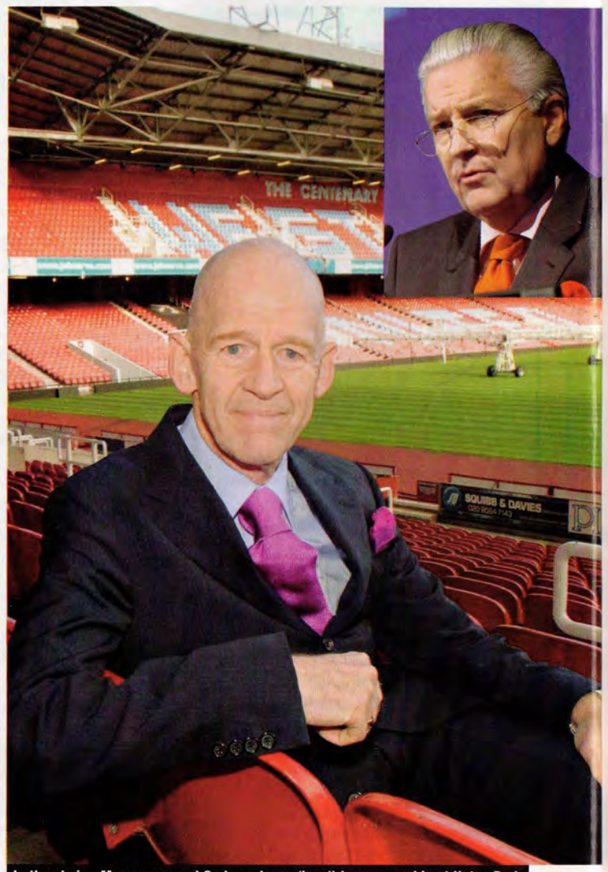
Gudmundsson, 65, is believed to have given substantial financial support to Valur's city rivals, KR, for whom his grandson currently plays. In 1986, having survived a scandal following the collapse of a shipping line of which he was a director, he and his son, Bjorgolfur Thor – today, a billionaire and the only Icelander to have appeared on the *Forbes* 500 rich list – bought a brewery in Russia they later sold for a reported £170million.

Gudmundsson's involvement in football has come mainly through his support for KR and the National Bank's sponsorship of the men's and women's Premier Divisions. This deal, which is set to continue until at least 2009, has seen him forge close ties with Magnusson, reputedly the driving force behind the move for West Ham.

With Magnusson installed as chairman and Gudmundsson as honorary life president, West Ham fans can look forward to some interesting times. At £108m, the vast majority put up by Gudmundsson, the club has already cost almost twice as much as the bank on which his fortune is based.

Rab Christie

'At £108m, the club has already cost almost twice as much as the bank on which Gudmundsson's fortune is based'



In the chair…Magnusson and Gudmundsson (inset) have moved in at Upton Park

Thumbs up…but Sanchez must now put his words into action

HUGO SANCHEZ

Mexico's finest player finally gets his dream national team job

AFTER YEARS OF lobbying, Hugo Sanchez has finally been appointed coach of Mexico. The former Real Madrid striker, who has spent the past four years goading and ridiculing predecessor Ricardo Lavolpe, now has to show he is as good as he says he is.

"I want us to be world champions and not limit ourselves to quarter-finals or semis. That's what we must put in our minds," he said.

Sanchez, 48, began by making a sharp U-turn, announcing he would consider fielding naturalised players, something for which he had bitterly criticised Lavolpe.

"Everyone will have the same opportunity," he said. "I have nothing against naturalised players; on the contrary, I thank them for helping Mexican football."

Sanchez is widely regarded as the finest player his country has produced, although he saved most of his best for Madrid.

As a coach, he won both championships played in 2004 with Pumas UNAM, but the following year his team lost the CONCACAF Champions Cup Final to Costa Rica's Saprissa and were thumped 5-0 at home by Cruz Azul in a league derby, prompting him to resign. He returned to coaching this year with Necaxa.

Seemingly, his mouth never gets tired. He launched a resentful attack on the federation for failing to choose him outright for the national team post after the 2002 World Cup. Instead, Sanchez was put on a shortlist with Lavolpe and Carlos Bianchi, prompting him to say: "They want a puppet which they can control but I'm not to be manipulated."

At the time, Sanchez said he would stop Mexico playing friendlies in the United States, claiming they brought no benefit to the side. His first match in charge will be…away to the United States on February 7.

Brian Homewood

Numbers game

£800m…

the amount paid by Mediapro to Real Madrid for a seven-year TV rights deal.

400…

the record total number of games played by Barcelona in European competition after their home Champions League game against Werder Bremen.

£36m…

the wages Wayne Rooney will earn over the course of his Manchester United contract after he signed an extension until 2012.

2…

the number of games played by Toluca on the same day – a Sudamericana Cup semi-final against Colo Colo in Chile and a Mexican league play-off against Jaguares.

99.1…

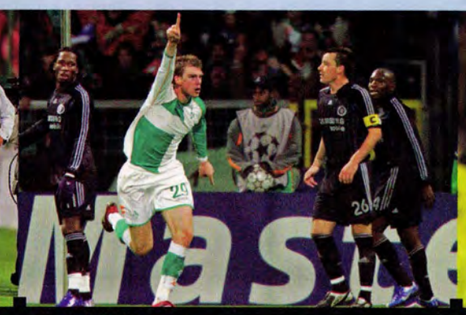
the percentage of votes cast for Franz Beckenbauer in the election for Bayern Munich president.

57,851…

the attendance for promotion-bound Atletico Mineiro's 4-1 victory over Avai in Brazil's second tier, the biggest crowd for any game in the country this year.

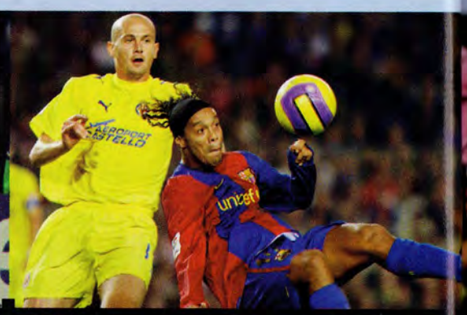
● 21/11/06

United in victory...Colo Colo celebrate their defeat of Toluca in the Sudamericana Cup semi-finals



● 22/11/06

Winning run...Werder Bremen's Per Mertesacker takes off after scoring the only goal of the Champions League game against Chelsea



● 25/11/06

Storming finish...Ronaldinho is poised to hit his wonder goal that sealed Barcelona's 4-0 league win against Villarreal

● 26/11/06

Weaving his way...Adriano evades the Palermo defence during Internazionale's 2-1 away win

● 27/11/06

Golden moment...Italy captain Fabio Cannavaro receives *France Football's Ballon d'Or*, the European Footballer of the Year award

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on Puskas...the hard law on "last man" fouls...and supporters, warts and all

MEMORIES of Ferenc Puskas. One, especially vivid, had nothing to do with his prowess on the pitch. It was night-time in Santiago at the 1962 World Cup, and exuberant Chilean fans were celebrating their team's achievement of finishing third. In a doorway, grinning and eating monkey nuts, the eternal Budapest urchin, there was Puskas.

It was his second World Cup and one he said he hadn't enjoyed; there was no longer the time and the room. He had played three games at centre-forward for Spain, his adoptive country, but they had not survived the group stage. Even had they gone on to win the tournament, you could hardly imagine this being any consolation to him for what happened in the 1954 finals, with Hungary.

The eternal urchin...Puskas

'It was said that at the end of the 1962 European Cup Final Puskas symbolically gave his shirt to the young Eusebio'

I still believe that the kick that won West Germany the Cup was the one with which Werner Liebrich, the German centre-half, lamed Puskas when the teams met in the group stage, Hungary winning 8-3.

Puskas surely should not have played when the teams met again in the Final. He was manifestly unfit and missed chances that he would have taken if fully fit. Having been out of commission since the first West Germany game, he had used his great influence to talk his way back into a team that had done pretty well without him, with left-winger Zoltan Czibor deputising at inside-left.

And yet near the end of the Final, with the Germans leading 3-2, didn't Puskas score a perfectly good goal after racing half the length of the field, only for Welsh linesman Mervyn Griffiths to rule him offside? Bill Ling, the English referee, agreed with Griffiths' verdict, but many believed the goal was good.

I was living in Florence in 1953 so I did not see Puskas lead the Hungarians to that crushing, historic 6-3 victory over England at Wembley. I heard the second half, to my horror, on the radio. Memorable still is Geoffrey Green's description in *The Times* of how, scoring one of his goals, Puskas pulled the ball back with the sole of his left foot (the right foot was always a mere adjunct) and "[England captain Billy] Wright went past him like a fire engine going to the wrong fire".

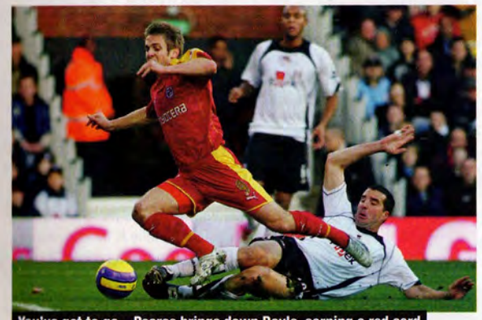
But the previous May I had seen Puskas and Hungary demolish a far from inept Italy side at Rome's Olympic stadium, on its inauguration day.

In May 1960, I was at Hampden to see Puskas and Alfredo Di Stefano playing for Real Madrid against Eintracht Frankfurt in the European Cup Final. Puskas scored four goals in the 7-3 win, his left foot irresistible, and the superbly ubiquitous Di Stefano got the other three.

Another vivid memory comes from the 1962 European Cup Final in Amsterdam, when Puskas scored a first-half hat-trick but Real lost 5-3 to Benfica. One of those goals came from an exquisite through pass by Di Stefano, which had Puskas trotting from the halfway line before shooting home.

It was said that at the end of the game, Puskas symbolically gave his shirt to the young Eusebio, whose right-footed shooting had rivalled his own with his left. But when, years afterwards, I met Puskas on the turf at Wembley he scornfully dismissed the tale.

The Romans used to have a saying: "*Dura lex sed lex*" (A hard law, but the law). That seemed appropriate after the recent match between Fulham and Reading at Craven Cottage. It was decided by an early penalty conceded by Fulham centre-half Ian Pearce, who was sent off, for fouling Reading striker Kevin Doyle, who converted the spot-kick.



You've got to go...Pearce brings down Doyle, earning a red card

Afterwards, both managers condemned the decision of referee Dermot Gallagher to expel Pearce. "The law is an ass," proclaimed Reading's Steve Coppell, a university graduate and a shrewd fellow. His counterpart, Chris Coleman, acknowledged, as Coppell did, that it had to be a penalty but believed, since there was no malice aforethought, that the referee should have used his discretion rather than doubly punish Fulham.

I recognised the moral case, but couldn't see how it had any basis in legality. The law is that when a player is denied a goalscoring opportunity by foul play, then the offender should be expelled. There is no mention of whether or not the offence occurs in the penalty box.

Remember that it was here in England that the rule was first introduced, in the 1980s, condemning the so-called "professional foul", only for the initiative to be blocked by FIFA. With typical perversity, the world body belatedly saw the light some years later and reinstated the rule for the game at large.

Before such a rule, cynical defenders were happy to commit "last man" fouls outside the box, knowing that all their team would concede would be a free-kick, while they themselves incurred a mere yellow card. What Coppell and Coleman were implicitly demanding was presumably that the law should be amended, so as not to apply in the box.

I can see a certain relevance in such a demand, not least since many a referee, awarding a penalty, does not expel the offender into the bargain. Overall, however, I believe things should stay as they are. As for Gallagher, who has had his trouble with the refereeing authorities over the years, it was surely unfair to expect him to risk their wrath and possible punishment in the cause of abstract justice.

WHAT is a "genuine supporter"? When Reading players Stephen Hunt and Ibrahima Sonko received death threats from evident Chelsea fans after each had put a Chelsea goalkeeper out of the game with their challenges, the London club declared that these could not be genuine supporters.

But supporters come in all shapes, sizes and conditions. West Ham's violent Inter City firm and Chelsea's former Headhunters certainly backed their teams, but believed as, alas, so many do today, that violence was part of the deal.

Back in the 1980s, when Ken Bates ran Chelsea, he insisted that when their hooligan fans ran amok away from home they were all good lads at heart – only to change his tune when the same kind of strife occurred at Stamford Bridge, even to the point of trying to erect an electric fence.

Notes & quotes

"Watching him play, you have the impression he's handing out sweets on the pitch."
Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard on his midfielder Andres Iniesta.

Visual treat...Iniesta

"Not so long ago clubs were proud to provide players to a national team. Today, they complain."
Ex-UEFA general secretary Gerhard Aigner.

"Here, I'm not respected. I've never known this before."
Real Madrid's Brazilian defensive midfielder Emerson hits out at the Bernabeu fans who constantly jeer him.

"That's football. There are just days when the dribble doesn't come off and the shot doesn't happen."
Ronaldinho denies that he was physically exhausted at the World Cup.

"I'm for a 24-team European Championship. It's a way of showing solidarity with the smaller federations."
UEFA president Lennart Johansson, out on the electoral stump, sees votes in a beefed-up finals tournament.

● 02/12/06

New venue, old rivalry…Arsenal beat Spurs 3-0 in the first north London derby at the Emirates stadium

● 05/12/06

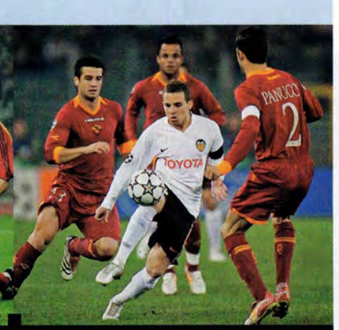
Outnumbered…Bastian Schweinsteiger loses possession during Bayern's 1-1 Champions League draw with Inter

● 05/12/06

Target man…Shaun Wright-Phillips hits Chelsea's second goal in the 2-0 home win over Levski Sofia

● 05/12/06

Under pressure…Bellamy battles on but Liverpool lose 3-2 at Galatasaray



● 05/12/06

Well-watched…Valencia's Aaron Niguez is surrounded during his side's 1-0 defeat away to Roma

far&wide

Warner off the hook again

CONCACAF PRESIDENT Jack Warner, renowned for his brushes with authority, has been let off the hook by FIFA once again. The executive committee expressed its disapproval at the Trinidadian's conduct following the alleged resale of World Cup tickets (reported in the November issue of *World Soccer*), but said it would not be taking any further disciplinary action.

"The committee drew attention to the fact that Mr Warner should be more cautious and prudent," said FIFA president Sepp Blatter. "That is all there is to say in relation to this affair and we now consider it closed."

The executive committee based its decision on a disciplinary committee report which said there was "no concrete evidence" that Warner knew about the resale of World Cup tickets by his son Daryan through Warner senior's former travel company, Simpaul.

FIFA opened its investigation into Warner's activities in September, following allegations he had personally profited from the resale of 180 World Cup tickets.

Last February, the world body's ethics and fair play committee deemed Warner, also a FIFA vice-president, to have a conflict of interests because Trinidad & Tobago's World Cup ticket allocation was being sold exclusively through Simpaul. But in March the executive committee decided against punishing Warner because he said he had severed his ties with the company.

Brush with FIFA…Warner was accused of profiting from World Cup ticket sales

Totti's petrol emotion

No doubt, there are quite a few petrol station attendants in Italy who dream of becoming professional footballers, whereas Francesco Totti recently revealed he would have been happy making his living in the forecourt business if he hadn't made it in football. "If I weren't a player, I'd have been a petrol station owner," the Roma captain declared. "When I was a child I saw their wallets full of cash. Even today, I still love the smell of petrol."

Whale of a time

Norwegian club Lillestrom have a real heavyweight as their new coach. Tom Nordlie is nicknamed "Keiko" after the killer whale in the *Free Willy* movies, and the 44-year-old makes no bones about his size. At a press conference to mark his move to Lillestrom from Viking Stavanger, he said: "I made the decision with my gut not my head," adding: "I listened to the bigger of the two."

Nordlie replaced Uwe Rosler after he could steer the club only to fourth place in the League.

Dedication to Angelina

Internazionale's Argentinian full-back Nicolas Burdisso dedicated his recent goal against Siena to his five-year-old daughter Angelina.

A year to the day before the game, she had completed her course of chemotherapy at a Buenos Aires hospital after surgery for a brain tumour.

Burdisso said: "Thankfully, now we dare hope that Angelina is growing up normally. But this is the day of a special anniversary, so my goal was for her – and with thanks to all the people at Inter and the fans who have supported my family."

The club gave Burdisso six months off so he could return to Buenos Aires after Angelina was originally diagnosed. He returned to Serie A action in time to earn a place in Argentina's squad at this year's World Cup.

Grateful…Burdisso

Not dead, only sleeping

Looking lively…Blanco

VETERAN MEXICAN international Cuauhtemoc Blanco is alive and well; the reports of his death were an exaggeration. On November 14, www.esmas.com, one of Mexico's leading sports websites, posted a story saying the 33-year-old had been killed in a car crash, and the news spread quickly through the country.

But after information agency Televisa News contacted Blanco's club, America, to verify the story, club officials phoned the player's home – and it emerged he was safe and sound asleep in bed. Blanco was less than impressed, saying: "How can they run a story like that without checking the facts? My family and I deserve respect."

Henrik Larsson… the 35-year-old Swedish striker accepted Alex Ferguson's invitation to play for Manchester United on a three-month loan deal.

Djibril Cisse… the French forward played his first game, a friendly for Marseille, after breaking a leg last summer.

Recruit…Larsson

Bora Milutinovic… the veteran coach was put in charge of Jamaica's national side.

GOOD MONTH FOR…

BAD MONTH FOR…

Carlos Alberto… the Figueirense midfielder was banned for a year after admitting he had falsified his date of birth to enable him to play in Brazil's victorious 2003 World Under-20 Youth Cup-winning side. "I'm 28, not 23," he said.

Ban…Carlos Alberto

Paolo Maldini… the 38-year-old Milan defender admitted injury may force him to retire before he is 40.

Pavel Nedved… Juventus's Czech midfielder was banned for five matches for threatening a referee who had sent him off.

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'Thank you for organising the trip to the Milan derby at the weekend. Everything was brilliant, it will be something I will never forget and we could not have gone to a better game - 4-3! I really cannot thank you enough, it was so good.'

David, Manchester

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Aftermath of violence...PSG and Nantes fans march in silent protest at the death of Quemener. Inset: fireman Roko is helped away after being injured by Marseille fans

Fatal consequences

The shooting of a PSG supporter by a policeman has left the country in shock

HOWARD JOHNSON in Paris

FIREMAN ANTHONY ROKO lost two fingers when on duty at Nice's home game against Marseille on October 29 after picking up an explosive device thrown by Marseille supporters believing it to be a flare. The incident caused plenty of outrage, with commentators from both inside and outside the game quick to ask what on earth is becoming of French society when being in a football stadium can be such a dangerous business.

Imagine the furore, then, after 25-year-old Paris Saint-Germain supporter Julien Quemener was shot dead by a plain clothes transport policeman after a home UEFA Cup tie against Hapoel Tel Aviv on November 23. The officer, Antoine Granomort, claims he was acting in self-defence after coming to the aid of a Jewish PSG fan who was being hunted down by racist supporters of the same club.

France is in shock, asking itself how this could happen in a supposedly sophisticated country. "Welcome to Paris 2006, end of the line for the civilised world," roared one newspaper headline, above an article that said: "A despicable indifference has led to a man's murder at 11 o'clock at night on the pavements of our capital city."

First, some background, before we examine how Quemener ended up dying on the streets of Paris.

Let us be clear. Violence and racism are not unheard of in connection with Paris Saint-Germain. In 1984 the then new pay-TV channel Canal Plus interviewed PSG supporters on the infamous Boulogne Kop at half-time of a match against Toulouse after seeing them give Nazi salutes.

In 1995 Liberian striker George Weah's last game for the club before his move to Milan was marred by a banner unfurled by PSG supporters that read: "Weah, we don't need you." The French word for need is *besoin* – and the "s" on the banner had been doctored to look like a swastika.

There are plenty who have since criticised PSG for not taking a hard enough line with such fans in those days, for opting for a policy of appeasement when perhaps a zero-tolerance attitude would have been more effective.

It has been alleged that some of the leaders of the supporters' clubs that sprang up in the mid-1980s and filled with hardcore PSG fans – borderline hooligans – were even employed by the club at one time.

To his credit, club president Alain Cayzac has publicly stated his wish to clean out Parc des Princes of any undesirables. He has said: "It's not all about money", and "I'd prefer to see the stands half empty, but at least [peopled] with supporters who share the same values as us".

Well, now he has his wish. A week after Quemener's death, the Paris police announced that the lower section of the Boulogne stand would be closed for PSG games until further notice. Then the club's home game against Toulouse, scheduled for December 3, was postponed because of security worries.

But even with such drastic measures in place, Cayzac has still got his work cut out to bring the club's most vile followers to heel.

Security concerns

Concerns had been raised before the Hapoel game about how security could be ensured when many Parisian Jews (many of them supporters of both clubs) would be attending with tickets that were not part of the Hapoel allocation.

Those concerns were well founded. The atmosphere in the ground turned nasty early on after a group of hardcore PSG fans expressed their anger at the sight of a number of Hapoel banners. There was an appeal for calm over the tannoy at half-time but the situation degenerated quickly after Hapoel put PSG to the sword on the pitch, winning 4-2.

PSG fans reportedly shouted "kill them, kill them" at the away supporters, and it seems that the 700 police on duty simply could not deal with the number of PSG hooligans who then spilled out of the ground looking for trouble. Certainly the yobs apparently had free rein to search other fans' bags for any signs of club allegiance, leading to a couple of nasty beatings for some unlucky Hapoel supporters.

But it was at the nearby Porte de Saint-Cloud Metro station where the violence really escalated. Yanniv Hazout, a French Jew who followed both PSG and Hapoel, was heading for the station with three friends. Granomort was waiting in his car nearby to pick up some colleagues who had been on patrol. When he saw Hazout being set upon because he was carrying an Israeli flag, the officer decided to go to his aid.

Gun drawn

Although Granomort was not in uniform, he apparently tried to keep the PSG fans off Hazout by using teargas and instructing them to get back. He then drew his gun, but stepping back he stumbled and fell, at which point, according to reports, he was attacked. Panicking, he fired at his assailants, hitting two of them. Quemener died at the scene.

Since the shooting, numerous meetings have been held as the authorities seek to explain the tragic turn of events. Cayzac got together with French League president Frederic Thiriez and Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy the day after the incident. The trio then met the chief of the Paris police, the government's football security minister and five representatives of various PSG supporters' clubs.

New measures were swiftly agreed to avoid this kind of incident happening again, ranging from regular meetings between supporters associations and the police to tighter restrictions on how to buy tickets. Then came the announcement about the closure of the Boulogne tier and the Toulouse postponement.

But not everyone has been focusing on eradicating racist-led football hooliganism since the shooting. Before PSG's next game, away to Nantes, hundreds of supporters from both clubs held a silent march towards the stadium carrying an enormous banner that read: "Who has the power to assassinate? Justice for Julien."

The Paris prosecutor now has to decide whether Granomort acted legitimately, in self-defence, or whether he should be charged. Some PSG supporters believe he has a case to answer.

All of this, of course, makes PSG's footballing problems seem minuscule by comparison. But there is no getting away from the fact that the club are in dire straits on the pitch. Guy Lacombe's side were only 13th after 15 games, 23 points behind leaders Lyon, and rumours circulate constantly that the coach is about to get the chop. Lacombe has even received the dreaded vote of confidence from Cayzac, who preferred to slaughter the referee rather than his coach after that match at Nantes, a 1-1 draw. But with many believing that former PSG hero Rai is already waiting in the wings, nobody will bet on Lacombe being in charge come the end of the season.

'Violence and racism are not unheard of in connection with Paris Saint-Germain'

Hero of France...Jacquet lifts the World Cup

AIME JACQUET, one of France's greatest footballing figures, leaves the scene on December 31. The national technical director heads into retirement at 65 with a long list of achievements to his name. He won five league titles as a midfielder in a 13-year spell at Saint-Etienne, then embarked on a coaching career during which he won three titles with Bordeaux, then steered France to the 1998 World Cup on that memorable night in Paris.

Reach for the stars

MLS has tweaked its strict salary rules to allow clubs to sign big-name foreign players

PAUL GARDNER in New York

THE BECKHAM RULE is in place at last, and Major League Soccer will be a better place for it. The former England captain could – as a direct result of the rule that unofficially bears his name – end up playing in MLS.

MLS commissioner Don Garber explains: "Currently, we don't have enough international star players in the League to attract a significant slice of that audience." By "that audience" he means the huge number of viewers who watched the World Cup on television and the vast crowds that turn up to watch international friendlies played in the USA, particularly when Mexico are involved.

What has stood in the way of MLS clubs signing top players so far has been the fact that its single-entity structure has imposed a severe salary cap on the teams. It has been almost impossible to pay a player more than £200,000 a year, although there are some notable exceptions – Freddy Adu and Landon Donovan receive some £500,000, with the extra money coming from sponsors.

"We need a mechanism to attract some World Cup players without derailing our strategy of financial stability," Garber says. Now the Beckham rule will allow MLS clubs to pay one player whatever they like, or can afford, above the £200,000 mark.

If any proof were required that the calibre of MLS football needs a boost, it came the day after the announcement of the new rule. On to the field in Dallas came Houston Dynamo and New England Revolution to play in the championship-deciding game.

Everything was in place for a splendid Final – beautiful weather, sold-out stadium and a national network telecast. Alas, the game was lousy – utterly vapid and boring – and needed a penalty shoot-out to decide the title in favour of Dynamo.

We've got it tickertaped... Houston Dynamo skipper Wade Barrett hoists the championship trophy, but the Final was a poor advert for MLS

The arrival of a bunch of stars will certainly help to improve that scenario. "We're making a bold move here," Garber says, "and I hope our coaches will use it to bring in exciting, attractive players. I wouldn't expect them to be signing goalkeepers. We're looking for more experience to add to our relatively young player pool."

Understandably, he has dealt primarily with ensuring financial stability since becoming commissioner in 1999 – the history of professional soccer in the USA is one of short-lived leagues that have gone broke. Now, he says, the financial situation is much rosier than ever before. "I feel more optimistic than at any time since I started. Yes, there's still an air of caution, because of the challenges that pro soccer has faced over the past decades. But this year has proved, with the World Cup TV viewing figures, that there is a huge market here for high-level soccer. I now have more interest than ever from new investors and from the media, from sponsors and even from politicians, who are willing to support public funding to help in building facilities."

Not such a major draw...Adu

IT CANNOT be denied that Freddy Adu's impact on MLS has been disappointing. He has not developed into anything remotely resembling a teenage phenomenon. There have been occasional bursts of brilliance, but not nearly enough. The declining interest in the DC United youngster is reflected in the team's attendance figures. In 2004, his first season, DC's away games were the League's biggest crowd pullers, with an average of over 23,000. This year, despite Adu getting more playing time, that figure was down to 14,193 – only the ninth highest average of the 12 teams.

Soccer-specific stadiums

Stadium-building has been one of MLS's major achievements. New, soccer-specific stadiums have been built in Columbus, Los Angeles, Dallas and Chicago, and others are under construction, or at an advanced planning stage, in Denver, New Jersey and Toronto, the latter for next season's new expansion club, Toronto FC.

This is not just a matter of erecting buildings. What the stadiums mean is that, for the first time, American professional soccer clubs will have somewhere to call home instead of playing in borrowed (and largely unsuitable) baseball or American football stadiums.

There's more. The League intends, says Garber, to give the teams a real club structure by introducing a range of youth teams.

MLS's single-entity structure has so far made the idea of developing local young talent unworkable. Teams discovering and training young players have been obliged to let them go, around the age of 16, into the League's annual draft – when they could be selected by any other team. Not surprisingly, youth squads have not been high on teams' agendas.

Now, in another major relaxing of the single-entity rules, MLS has announced that it is requiring all the clubs to run youth teams in the under-14, under-15, under-16, under-18 and under-20 age groups. The pay-off for the clubs is that they will be able to retain the rights to a player they have developed.

The hidden agenda here is that this is yet another attempt – the boldest yet – to make sure that promising youngsters are kept out of college soccer. The utter inadequacy of the college game as a preparation for life in the professional ranks is now beyond dispute. MLS is trying to ensure that promising kids are given top-level coaching and playing experience as soon as possible.

Each year MLS goes through a surreal process known as the Superdraft. Over 50 young players – most of them college products – are drafted by MLS clubs. Most of them are patently not ready, nor ever will be, for a pro career.

But such is the importance of a college education in the States that it is extremely difficult for anyone to openly criticise the set-up. Even in this latest MLS scheme, it has been thought necessary to make sure that "MLS youth programmes will not jeopardise a player's college eligibility".

In this connection, it is worthwhile emphasising that three of the brightest of the USA's younger talents – Donovan, Adu and DaMarcus Beasley – never played college soccer.

Adu stands as a symbol of a big problem for MLS – how to hang on to players. The DC United teenager has been making it clear for two years that he wants to go to Europe, and no doubt he will as soon as he is 18 (on June 2 next year). New England Revolution's Clint Dempsey, one of the most promising youngsters to come through in the past year, will be heading in the same direction. This player drain is hard for the USA to withstand because the talent pool is relatively small.

That said, MLS will begin its 12th season with only one urgent problem: how to improve, quickly, the calibre of play. In a country where it needs to attract spectators who are new to the sport, an entertaining, attacking, goalscoring version is essential.

The Beckham rule is the short-term solution. MLS is therefore backing it up with a move that should have been made years ago – the creation of a centralised, well-organised scouting system to cover Central and South America. Until now, scouting in those areas has been left to individual clubs and has been a patchy affair.

The potential talent available – and at bargain prices – can be appreciated by looking at three of the League's most dynamic players, Argentinian playmaker Christian Gomez (DC United), Honduran midfielder Amado Guevara (New York Red Bulls) and potent Guatemalan goalscorer Carlos Ruiz (FC Dallas).

'I wouldn't expect our coaches to be signing goalkeepers'

MLS commissioner Don Garber wants entertainers in his league

Pain and no gain ...Atletico Madrid's Martin Petrov has become another knee ligament damage statistic

Sick notes

La Liga has been hit by an unprecedented number of injuries and illnesses

SID LOWE
in Madrid

YOU COULD BE FORGIVEN for thinking that La Liga had fallen victim to some mysterious curse because the players have been dropping like flies. It all began in August, when Osasuna striker Pierre Webo returned from his native Cameroon with malaria and had to abandon the club's pre-season training. Since then there have been an unprecedented number of injuries and illnesses, leaving Spanish football broken, battered and bruised, sweating, confused and running a temperature.

Real Sociedad's Igor Jauregi picked up the helicobacter pylori bacteria which affects the stomach and is threatening to end his career at the age of 32; Getafe's Daniel Guiza suffered such a severe bout of gastroenteritis that he had to be kept in hospital for a week, had missed seven games by the start of December and has been forced to change his entire diet and never stray more than a few metres from a toilet; and Villarreal's Guille Franco has complained of a back pain that club doctors just have not been able to locate.

Then there's Sevilla's flying winger Jesus Navas, who is suffering from anxiety attacks. Real Betis defender Damia has severe hip pain, and still has not played for his new club, after screws inserted to clear up a cartilage operation started scraping against the bone. And Betis goalkeeper Toni Doblas has a thrombosis in an arm.

But it's not the strange nature of some of the injuries and illnesses that really worries, rather the high incidence and the effect that that is having on the top clubs and the League itself. Plus the fact that one injury, above all, has become shockingly common – knee ligament damage.

Robert Pires tore his ligaments before he had even made his debut for Villarreal, and it proved to be the start of a growing trend. Betis' German winger David Odonkor found his season over almost before it had begun, Atletico Madrid lost both wingers – Martin Petrov and Maxi Rodriguez – within a couple of days of each other, Deportivo La Coruna lost Juan Carlos Valeron and Bodipo, and Gonzalo and Nihat Kahveci joined Pires in the operating theatre at Villarreal.

Cracking knees

In total, 20 players have torn knee ligaments so far this season, from Samuel Eto'o at Barcelona, the highest-profile victim, to Pablo Orbaiz at Athletic Bilbao and Real Madrid's Cicinho. According to calculations carried out by sports daily *Marca*, "a knee goes 'crack' every six days".

They're calling it the "League of the Stretchers", and things are even more worrying when considered alongside the past 18 months or so: Barcelona, for instance, had Xavi, Gabi and Edmilson all out with knee ligament injuries at the same time last term.

No wonder Villarreal coach Manuel Pellegrini said: "This is not normal; we have to sit down and study this carefully, to find out why this is happening."

There have been plenty of theories. Pablo Alfaro, the Racing Santander defender and a qualified doctor, tentatively suggested that the increased intensity and speed of the Spanish game has put greater pressures on players' knees than before, while the demands of clubs have shortened the amount of time players are granted for recovery, weakening the knee's resistance. Others have argued that the use of synthetic turf, mixed in with natural grass, has changed the nature of playing surfaces, making them less stable.

Sports medicine expert Ignacio Romo has blamed modern boots. "These days boot manufacturers worry about only one thing – making the boot light," he claimed. "But in doing so they forget some of the vital qualities needed when it comes to protecting the foot: firmness, support and stability. You can see that in the way these injuries are occurring. Knee ligaments used to get damaged in bad challenges or in falling badly from jumping. These days, players simply fall over unchallenged after losing their balance – and boots are less and less stable. It's simple."

If only it was. In fact, experts cannot agree on a catch-all reason; indeed, most agree that there isn't one. With that in mind, Castellon-based specialist Dr Luis Tarrega has sent a questionnaire to all 40 first and second division clubs to establish every possible cause, from the weather to the kind of boots worn (brand, material, number and type of studs), from the minute in which the injury occurred to the players' pre-match meal, from previous injuries to vitamin supplements and medications taken, from the type of training undertaken to height, weight and even the players' sex lives.

It may sound intrusive but Tarrega is expecting a positive response because of the injuries' detrimental effects on the clubs. For example, Valencia, who had been looking like serious title contenders, have slipped into mid-table without a win in a month amid a major injury crisis. Only seven first-team squad members have not suffered an injury this season, and the situation has been compounded by the fact that players who vie for the same starting berth have been sidelined simultaneously.

Hobbling out

Left-wingers Vicente, Jaime Gavilan and Mario Regueiro have all been injured at the same time. Left-back Asier Del Horno has not yet played for his new club since his return to Spain from Chelsea, while his intended reserve, Emiliano Moretti, has been out all season. As for central midfield, Carlos Marchena, David Albelda, Ruben Baraja and Edu have all had injuries that coincided with each other. And no sooner did leading scorer David Villa pick up a (thankfully minor) injury than fellow striker Fernando Morientes was also hobbling out of training.

Now, the physical injuries have begun to affect the psychological state of the camp at Mestalla, and the need (or lack of it) to buy new players has worsened the already sour relationship between coach Quique Sanchez Flores and sporting director Amedeo Carboni. Baraja, the man "responsible" for injuring Regueiro during training, is reported to be distraught, while, according to Sanchez Flores, the rest of the squad "is ill". Every player, he says, "can't avoid thinking that he's going to be next". Midfielder David Silva agrees, saying: "We're terrified, there's definitely nerves among the players."

Sanchez Flores also admits he is suffering mentally. He says: "My mind is not completely healthy. I play football with my mates on Mondays and I'm convinced I'm going to get injured." The way things are going, he's probably right.

'My mind's not completely healthy. I play football with my mates on Mondays and I'm convinced I'm going to get injured'

Even Valencia coach Quique Sanchez Flores has the jitters

TV winner...Ramon Calderon

REAL MADRID have pulled off the world's biggest single-club television rights deal after signing an £800million, seven-year agreement with Mediapro. That eclipses the £670m, seven-year deal Barcelona have with the same company. "It's the most important contract in the history of worldwide sport," boasted Madrid president Ramon Calderon.

Decline and fall

In the 1950s, Hungarian football boasted such great players as Ferenc Puskas and the national team nearly won the World Cup. It's a far cry from today

PETERJON CRESSWELL in Budapest

AS HUNGARY PREPARED for a national day of mourning for its greatest sporting hero, Ferenc Puskas, many were reflecting on what had gone wrong with the country's football since he was in his pomp.

Puskas, one of the world's finest players, was raised on the bare pitches of Kispest, south Budapest, where he perfected the technique that allowed him to star in two of the finest post-war sides: Hungary's "Golden Team" and Real Madrid, the winners of five consecutive European Cups from 1956.

Puskas joined Real from Kispest-based Honved, the army club, which provided the bulk of the Golden Team, including Jozsef Bozsik, Puskas' boyhood friend. The national side changed footballing history by beating the old masters England 6-3 at Wembley in 1953 and 7-1 in Budapest the following year. But soon afterwards, Hungary's hopes of reaching the pinnacle were dashed when they suffered a controversial 3-2 defeat by West Germany in the World Cup Final, with Puskas denied a late equaliser by the linesman's flag.

Come the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and Honved were abroad, preparing for a European Cup tie against Athletic Bilbao. Bozsik answered the call to come back home afterwards but Puskas stayed abroad to find glory in Spain. The team never played together again, either as Hungary or Honved.

The latter are a much different proposition these days. A trip to Honved's Bozsik stadium on the rickety number 42 tram to the end stop will immediately tell you much about what is wrong with the Hungarian game 50 years on. A couple of thousand souls will be gathered under the only stand of the dilapidated ground, a statue of Bozsik perched in front of the venue's shabby bar and souvenir shop. You may be able to buy T-shirts of the great Puskas but the football you will be watching will bear little resemblance to what you would have seen in the golden days. Poor technique by demotivated players, both Hungarian and bargain-basement fellow eastern Europeans, accentuates the depressing experience of an afternoon at the crumbling venue.

Tribute to a legend...Honved and Diosgyor players pay their respects to Puskas with a banner reading "Little Brother, we'll never forget you." Little Brother was Puskas' nickname in Hungary

It's the same all over Hungary, at the capital's five other main clubs and at the leading provincial outfits of Debrecen, Gyor and Zalaegerszeg.

The two clubs with the biggest potential both hit the headlines recently – for the wrong reasons. The most promising of the pair, Ujpest, whose nursery agreement with Feyenoord may show the way for other Hungarian clubs to follow, lost 4-0 at home to Vaduz of Liechtenstein in the UEFA Cup. Their biggest rivals, Ferencvaros, the winners of most league championships and with the widest fan base, were relegated to the second division by the FA because of long-term debt problems. "Fradi's" financial worries had been common knowledge for years but only Istvan Kisteleki, the newly-elected FA boss, had the guts to do anything about it.

Sign of the times...protesters in Budapest

FERENCVAROS' demotion gave rise to demonstrations, most notably during the wider political protests in Budapest in September, when some of "Fradi's" notoriously right-wing fans took to the streets to demand the club's reinstatement in the top flight. During the protests, sparked by the admission of Socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany that his party had lied to the public, there was also the rare sight of fans from rival clubs coming together to demand that Hungarian football put its house in order.

Biting the bullet

As part of a bid to rid the domestic game of financial mismanagement and corruption, and with UEFA's decision about the hosting rights for Euro 2012 looming, Kisteleki bit the bullet and threw Ferencvaros into the lower flight for the first time in the club's long history.

Kisteleki is staking his reputation on 2012, the hosting rights for which will be announced next April. If Hungary succeed – and their joint bid with Croatia was only narrowly behind Italy's in the first round of voting – then the necessary investment in the local infrastructure will change the game here dramatically. Just look at Portugal, another rusting giant, and its superb hosting of Euro 2004.

The woes of football are common throughout the former Eastern Bloc countries: an end to state support, poor across-the-board private investment, low attendances, little sponsorship, negligible television revenues, the exodus of talented players and a core of violent right-wing supporters. Yet although Hungary had a head start on its regional rivals in economic terms after 1989, its national team trails way behind Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic. All have competed, and occasionally shone, at recent major finals. Hungary haven't even qualified for any since 1986.

The team's fortunes reached their lowest ebb shortly before Puskas' death when Hungary – ironically, under the leadership of Bozsik's son, Peter – lost to Malta in a Euro 2008 qualifier, virtually ending any hopes of reaching the finals. A team ranked 144th in the world had achieved only their fourth victory in 40 years of competitive fixtures when outplaying the Hungarians.

Bozsik junior, who resigned two weeks later, had led Zalaegerszeg to the championship in 2002, and the team beat Manchester United in a Champions League qualifying match soon afterwards. He had the potential to be a successful national coach, but what he didn't have was the players.

But there is some hope for the future. Bozsik's interim replacement, Peter Varhidi, with 10 years' experience in domestic club football, opted for youth in his one game in charge, a friendly against Canada. Indeed, the side he fielded was the youngest national XI in living memory – but they still managed a 1-0 victory.

Accent on youth

It was no surprise that Varhidi, whose father played in the same squad as Bozsik and Puskas, went for youth as he is also the coach of Hungary's creditable Under-19s. A few days before the Malta debacle, his youngsters qualified for the European Championship second qualifying round for the fifth successive season.

MTK striker Krisztian Nemeth scored seven of Hungary's 12 goals in the three first qualifying round matches, while team-mate Adam Vass made the step up to senior level against Canada. Vass, who has just signed professional forms for Stoke, came in for special praise from Varhidi after the match, which took place in the youngster's home town of Szekesfehervar.

The goal was scored by Tamas Priskin, one of Hungary's legionnaires in England, with Watford. He follows in the footsteps of midfielder Zoltan Gera, who arrived in the Premiership a meek if gifted individual and earned his spurs in fierce relegation battles for West Bromwich Albion, and goalkeeper Gabor Kiraly of Crystal Palace. The duo have proved that Hungarians can succeed in the most physically demanding league in Europe, though not the best in terms of technique.

Although Varhidi was in charge for only one match, he has left a positive sign for his successor. "We can see that there is a future for Hungarian football," he said. "But there is a long way to go."

'Ferencvaros were thrown into the second tier for the first time'

CLUB GUIDE

2 GYOR
Won back-to-back league titles in the early 1980s and are potential provincial giants. Gyor have a decent-sized stadium, which is currently under reconstruction with a view to staging Euro 2012 games, and are stable financially. The club are also renowned for their academy.

3 TATABANYA
Went into decline after a successful spell during the Communist era but have enjoyed a recent revival thanks to an influx of cash from Greek-American Konstantinos Mokaris.

4 FEHERVAR
Formerly known as Videoton, this club were the surprise package of last season and are still strong this term. Based in the town of Szekesfehervar near Lake Balaton and part-owned by the council. Investment is needed for stadium improvements, especially since the ground is a potential Euro 2012 venue.

5 VAC
Broke the Budapest clubs' stranglehold on the championship in 1994, but these top-flight regulars look odds on for relegation this season.

6 MTK
This traditionally Jewish club have no debts and plenty of silverware – they are favourites to win the title again this term – but only a modest fan base and little clout in the game. The most promising aspect of the club has been the role of ex-owner Gabor Varszegi, who has switched his investment into sponsoring a football academy.

7 UJPEST
The former state police side are arch-rivals of Ferencvaros. Recently upgraded their stadium, which often stages national team games, while on the pitch the accent is on youth. Ujpest had a nursery arrangement with Feyenoord and now St Truiden of Belgium.

8 VASAS
One of the most popular sides in the 1960s but they have trouble attracting fans these days. Owner Janos Jambor made his money in construction yet investment is lacking for the rebuilding of Vasas' dilapidated old ground. Current coach is Geza Meszoly, son of the club's former star player Kalman Meszoly.

1 SOPRON
Ambitious club co-owned by Romanian Marius Vizer and the city council. Pulled off the transfer coup of last season by signing former Lazio star Giuseppe Signori, and although he has since left, the team is still filled with Italians and Romanians. There is not much sense of young Hungarians being nurtured here.

9 HONVED
The former army side are now owned by the Hemingway Group, who have the franchise for Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut in Hungary. The crumbling Bozsik stadium is finally having some money spent on it.

17 FERENCVAROS
Biggest club in the country in terms of honours won and support base but now in the second division after being demoted because of large debts. New president Zsolt Damosy has experience in the global sports business having managed Hungary's boxing team.

16 ZALAEGERSZEG
Champions in 2002 and famously beat Manchester United in a Champions League qualifier. The club have few debts and a lucrative sponsorship deal with energy giant E-on. But although they are strong in the League this season, many feel they are over-reliant on youngsters developed at the club's nursery.

14 PECS
A club with a long tradition. The Red and Blacks had their best spell in the early 1990s when they won the domestic cup.

15 KAPOSVAR
A modest provincial club founded in 1923.

13 PAKS
The Green and Whites crept into the top flight last season having spent most of their 50-year history in the third division.

12 DEBRECEN
Based in Hungary's second city, the one-time railway workers' club are the strongest provincial side and have won the League for the past two seasons. Debrecen are in a relatively stable financial position and have a decent fan base, but their stadium is small and lacks facilities.

11 DIOSGYOR
The flagship club of Hungary's third biggest city, Miskolc, in the north-east rustbelt.

10 RAKOSPALOTA
A club from the Budapest suburbs who just avoided relegation last season – they may not be so lucky this time round.

WHO'S WHO

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN HUNGARIAN FOOTBALL

● ISTVAN KISTELEKI – FA president since February 2006 and he has had to be tough in his first few months. His decision to demote Ferencvaros for financial mismanagement led to death threats, and Kisteleki has subsequently been forced to employ bodyguards. Previously a coach, but only at a modest level. Fully behind the campaign for Hungary to co-host Euro 2012.

Sandor Puhl

Istvan Kisteleki (right)

● TAMAS GYARFAS – a key figure in the bid for the 2012 hosting rights. A prominent media businessman and head of the powerful Hungarian Swimming Association. Often seen in sporting debates on national television.

● GYORGY MEZEY – formerly a national team coach and prominent club manager, now de facto head of football training and education in Hungary. FA vice-president under previous regime of Imre Bozoky.

● GYORGY BODNAR – wealthy businessman and passionate football fan who owns the broadcasting rights to Hungarian football. His opinions are much sought after by the media and his controversial views have led to threats of legal action. Famously paid £100,000 for artefacts belonging to Ferenc Puskas at an auction in 2005 – and then donated them all to the national sports museum.

● SANDOR PUHL – refereed the 1994 World Cup Final, then became a leading official at the FA under Bozoky. Currently a football pundit on TV, his friendly diplomacy and solid reputation may see him back in the game in another capacity before long.

Tamas Gyarfas (centre)

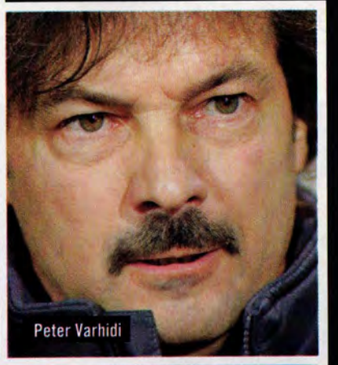
● KALMAN MESZOLY – starred for Hungary at the 1966 World Cup and has since pursued a career in coaching, including a stint as national team boss. Acts as advisor to Kisteleki and is thought to have had an influential role in the decision to demote Ferencvaros. Because of this, Meszoly, like Kisteleki, was threatened by "Fradi" fans and also now uses bodyguards.

● TIBOR NYILASI – head of the country's youth football programme and seen by many as a future FA president. Arguably Hungary's best player since 1966 and a fan favourite at Ferencvaros, where he also coached.

● ANTAL ROTH – former international and successful coach of Hungary's Under-19, Under-20 and Under-21 sides. Reportedly turned down the senior team role.

● PETER VARHIDI – former Ujpest coach who won plaudits for his management of the national Under-18 and Under-19s and when taking charge of the senior team for the recent friendly against Canada in the aftermath of the Malta debacle. Varhidi may yet get the senior job full-time if current favourite Laszlo Boloni does not take it.

Additional research by Attila Palkovacs


Peter Varhidi

Tibor Nyilasi

WORLD SOCCER 2006 AWARDS

The Winners

Fabio Cannavaro
World Player of the Year

Marcello Lippi
World Manager of the Year

Barcelona
World Team of the Year

Lionel Messi
Young Player of the Year

Horacio Elizondo
Referee of the Year

IN A YEAR DOMINATED by the World Cup, it is fitting that the captain of Italy, the tournament winners, has been judged by you to have been the world's best player over the past 12 months.

Fabio Cannavaro is only the second defender to win *World Soccer's* top prize in the awards' 25-year history, after compatriot Paolo Maldini in 1994. But his margin of victory was one of the highest.

Cannavaro, who left Juventus for Real Madrid in the summer, took 40 per cent of the votes, more than three times as many as Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o and Thierry Henry of Arsenal and France, who finished second and third. Cannavaro's personal standing appears to have been unaffected by the crisis that engulfed Italian football, and Juventus in particular.

Eto'o's position as runner-up is a tribute to his Champions League and Spanish league success with Barcelona, but his cause was not helped by Cameroon's failure to qualify for the World Cup while he also missed the last three months of the year with a knee injury.

Henry was on the losing side in both the World Cup Final and the Champions League Final, the two major competitions of the year.

Ronaldinho, last year's award winner, finished only fourth, a reflection of his poor form for Brazil at the World Cup. Fifth place went to Italy keeper Gianluigi Buffon, who won praise for sticking with Juve despite their demotion to Serie B.

Italy's World Cup victory was also the decisive factor in the Manager award, with Marcello Lippi a clear winner ahead of Barcelona's Frank Rijkaard and Germany's Jurgen Klinsmann. Jose Mourinho, the winner for the past two years, finished back in fourth.

But it was not to be a clean sweep for Italy, since Barcelona took the Team award. There was a two-horse race in this category, with Barcelona's flair and attacking style winning the day over the *Azzurri's* more prosaic approach.

Barca also triumphed in the Young Player award, their Argentinian starlet Lionel Messi seeing off the challenge of Cesc Fabregas and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Another Argentinian, Horacio Elizondo, was named Referee of the Year for his handling of the World Cup Final, as well as the England-Portugal quarter-final.

Votes were received from 49 different countries, once again demonstrating the diversity of *World Soccer's* readership.

2006 – HOW THEY VOTED

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

		% of votes
1	Fabio Cannavaro (Juventus/Real Madrid & Italy)	40.1
2	Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona & Cameroon)	12.6
3	Thierry Henry (Arsenal & France)	12.1
4	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	8.2
5	Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus & Italy)	4.9
6	Didier Drogba (Chelsea & Ivory Coast)	3.3
7	Juan Roman Riquelme (Villarreal & Argentina)	2.1
8	Miroslav Klose (Werder Bremen & Germany)	1.6
9	Kaka (Milan & Brazil)	1.4
10	Deco (Barcelona & Portugal)	1.3
	Others	12.4

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1	Marcello Lippi (Italy)	35.7
2	Frank Rijkaard (Barcelona)	21.9
3	Jurgen Klinsmann (Germany)	16.4
4	Jose Mourinho (Chelsea)	4.9
5	Arsene Wenger (Arsenal)	4.3
6	Luiz Felipe Scolari (Brazil)	2.8
7	Guus Hiddink (PSV Eindhoven/Australia)	2.2
8	Raymond Domenech (France)	1.7
9	Walter Smith (Scotland)	1.1
10	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	0.7
	Others	8.3

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

1	Barcelona	42.3
2	Italy	34.6
3	Lyon	4.3
4	Germany	3.8
5	Internacional	2.7
6	France	2.6
7	Arsenal	2.2
8	Argentina	1.4
9	Chelsea	1.2
10	Brazil	0.9
	Others	4.0

YOUNG PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1	Lionel Messi (Barcelona & Argentina)	35.8
2	Cesc Fabregas (Arsenal & Spain)	19.8
3	Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United & Portugal)	18.2
4	Lukas Podolski (Koln/Bayern Munich & Germany)	8.7
5	Aaron Lennon (Tottenham & England)	4.6
6	Robinho (Real Madrid & Brazil)	1.6
7	Yoann Gourcuff (Rennes/Milan)	1.4
8	Emmanuel Eboue (Arsenal & Ivory Coast)	1.2
9	Wayne Rooney (Manchester United & England)	1.1
10	Franck Ribery (Marseille & France)	0.9
	Others	5.7

REFEREE OF THE YEAR

1	Horacio Elizondo (Argentina)	38.7
2	Benito Archundia (Mexico)	30.5
3	Lubos Michel (Slovakia)	8.5
4	Markus Merk (Germany)	7.4
5	Valentin Ivanov (Russia)	4.7
6	Mark Shield (Australia)	2.1
7	Roberto Rosetti (Italy)	1.9
8	Jorge Larrionda (Uruguay)	1.1
9	Graham Poll (England)	0.9
10	Alan Wiley (England)	0.7
	Others	3.5

PREVIOUS WINNERS

WORLD PLAYER

		% of votes
1982	Paolo Rossi (Juventus & Italy)	23
1983	Zico (Udinese & Brazil)	28
1984	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	54
1985	Michel Platini (Juventus & France)	21
1986	Diego Maradona (Napoli & Argentina)	36
1987	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	39
1988	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	43
1989	Ruud Gullit (Milan & Holland)	24
1990	Lothar Matthaus (Internazionale & West Germany)	22
1991	Jean-Pierre Papin (Marseille & France)	25
1992	Marco Van Basten (Milan & Holland)	19
1993	Roberto Baggio (Juventus & Italy)	14
1994	Paolo Maldini (Milan & Italy)	27
1995	Gianluca Vialli (Juventus & Italy)	18
1996	Ronaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	17
1997	Ronaldo (Barcelona/Internazionale & Brazil)	27
1998	Zinedine Zidane (Juventus & France)	23
1999	Rivaldo (Barcelona & Brazil)	42
2000	Luis Figo (Barcelona/Real Madrid & Portugal)	26
2001	Michael Owen (Liverpool & England)	31
2002	Ronaldo (Internazionale/Real Madrid & Brazil)	26
2003	Pavel Nedved (Juventus & Czech Republic)	36
2004	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	29
2005	Ronaldinho (Barcelona & Brazil)	39

WORLD MANAGER

1982	Enzo Bearzot (Italy)	49
1983	Sepp Piontek (Denmark)	29
1984	Michel Hidalgo (France)	30
1985	Terry Venables (Barcelona)	30
1986	Guy Thys (Belgium)	15
1987	Johan Cruyff (Ajax)	25
1988	Rinus Michels (Holland/Bayer Leverkusen)	48
1989	Arrigo Sacchi (Milan)	42
1990	Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany)	53
1991	Michel Platini (France)	42
1992	Richard Moller Nielsen (Denmark)	28
1993	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	21
1994	Carlos Alberto Parreira (Brazil)	17
1995	Louis Van Gaal (Ajax)	42
1996	Berti Vogts (Germany)	28
1997	Ottmar Hitzfeld (Borussia Dortmund)	17
1998	Arsene Wenger (Arsenal)	28
1999	Alex Ferguson (Manchester United)	60
2000	Dino Zoff (Italy)	18
2001	Gerard Houllier (Liverpool)	28
2002	Guus Hiddink (South Korea)	28
2003	Carlo Ancelotti (Milan)	20
2004	Jose Mourinho (FC Porto/Chelsea)	36
2005	Jose Mourinho (Chelsea)	34

WORLD TEAM

1982	Brazil	30	1994	Milan	33
1983	Hamburg	29	1995	Ajax	50
1984	France	45	1996	Nigeria	31
1985	Everton	42	1997	Borussia Dortmund	20
1986	Argentina	15	1998	France	35
1987	FC Porto	38	1999	Manchester United	61
1988	Holland	43	2000	France	33
1989	Milan	51	2001	Liverpool	26
1990	West Germany	28	2002	Brazil	24
1991	France	20	2003	Milan	23
1992	Denmark	37	2004	Greece	25
1993	Parma	24	2005	Liverpool	27

YOUNG PLAYER

2005	Robinho (Santos/Real Madrid & Brazil)	30

REFEREE

2005	Pierluigi Collina (Italy)	31

World Player of the Year Fabio Cannavaro

Case for the defence

Italy's World Cup-winning captain is one of a rare breed, says Keir Radnedge

FABIO CANNAVARO wasted no time in attributing his success in lifting a number of individual player awards to the support of his team-mates, both at former club Juventus and Italy.

"It is thanks to them that I have been able to show my qualities on the pitch," said the 33-year-old World Cup-winning captain, now at Real Madrid, and whose prizes have included *World Soccer's* Player of the Year award and *France Football's Ballon d'Or*, the European Footballer of the Year prize. "So I must thank my Juve team-mates and all my colleagues from the national team."

Not everyone, even in Italy, was united in praise of Cannavaro's elevation among the legends in the record books. TV analyst Paolo Ziliani says: "We are proud of big prize-winners such as Gianni Rivera and Roberto Baggio but we have problems with those such as Paolo Rossi, who was involved in match-fixing, and Fabio Cannavaro, who benefited from match-fixing."

Cannavaro was born and brought up in Naples and was a ball boy at Napoli's Stadio San Paolo at the height of Maradona mania in the late 1980s. He was even a ballboy when Maradona's Argentina beat Italy on penalties in the World Cup semi-final of 1990.

Months later, Cannavaro and Maradona found themselves at even closer quarters when the Italian was assigned to mark Argentina's captain in a practice game. Cannavaro apparently went in so hard that one coach told him to ease up, only for Maradona to call out: "You're doing fine, carry on as you are."

Claudio Ranieri handed him his first-team debut in March 1993, a 4-3 defeat by Juventus. Two years later he joined Parma, but was sad to leave. Cannavaro says: "I know Naples has a particular reputation but it is a very special city, my city. Some of it is not safe but you can say that about most big cities. I was very lucky to become a professional footballer. Some of the kids I grew up with are no longer with us because of drugs or crime.

"Fortunately my family was very solid, and then, when I was growing up, the city was mad about Maradona. I used to play football in the streets as kids do now and I am proud about Naples and for them through my achievements – though I do not kid myself I will ever come close to Maradona in the city's affections, no matter how many awards I get."

Cannavaro stayed seven seasons with Parma, where he formed a tight defensive unit with future Juve colleagues Gigi Buffon and Lilian Thuram, played European football every season and won the UEFA Cup in 1999. The memory of the Final victory against Marseille in Moscow would later be tarnished, however, by the screening of a secret film of Cannavaro receiving an infusion at the team's hotel before the game.

By then, Cannavaro had also become a national team regular, had starred at the 1998 World Cup and was an obvious fundraising asset when Parma's finances began to creak. Thus, he moved to Internazionale, where he spent three unsettled, below-par seasons before being "rescued" by Juventus in 1994 by a combination of coach Fabio Capello and notorious general manager Luciano Moggi.

Cannavaro's relationship with Moggi remains ambiguous. The defender has excused Italian football's favourite match-fixing scapegoat on the grounds that "he only did the same as other people".

Before the World Cup, Cannavaro was among those interviewed and who had his home searched by magistrates inquiring into the business affairs and practices of the all-powerful GEA player agency run by Moggi's son, Alessandro.

As for the match-fixing issue, the defender says: "We players knew nothing. What I do know is that our quality was proved by the fact that eight Juventus players, Italian and French, were in the World Cup Final. This was a strong team who did not need any outside assistance to win trophies. And this was not really match-fixing, remember. This was about influence off the pitch. There was no money involved."

Siege mentality

The inquiry, which produced a stream of sensational revelations, worked in Italy's favour at the World Cup, encouraging a siege mentality that coach Marcello Lippi and skipper Cannavaro wielded to powerful effect within the dressing room.

So Italy went on to win the Final on penalties against France in the German capital, which earned Cannavaro, playing his 100th international, his new nickname of the "Berlin Wall".

He says: "Those of us from Juventus felt in particular we needed to prove that what we had won we had won out on the pitch. We were disappointed the prizes we had earned were taken away from us. Inter's players know they did not deserve it [Inter were named champions after the 2005-06 title was stripped from Juve]. There was a clear gap in class between us."

Italy conceded only two goals en route to the Final, with Cannavaro giving his finest display in the semi-final against Germany in Dortmund. A personal regime based on "eating well, getting plenty of sleep and sex" supported his progress to becoming only the second defender to win *World Soccer's* Player of the Year award, after Paolo Maldini in 1994.

The failure of the major attacking stars to shine in Germany opened the door to Cannavaro's award success, according to former Brazil wing-back Leonardo. He says: "He benefited because this was a merely average World Cup, technically. Cannavaro has a low centre of gravity, which means he is very fast. He reads the game well and always arrives before the forward when he tackles. He has incredible concentration, inner strength and is superbly fit. He is not very tall but he is rarely beaten in the air because he jumps so well. He also has great charisma and people clearly like him."

'Juventus were strong and did not need outside help to win trophies'

Cannavaro had helped Juventus to a second successive Serie A title last season but their subsequent demotion to Serie B prompted his instant, if reluctant, departure for Real Madrid. He says: "If I had been much younger it would not have occurred to me to leave Juventus. Last season was outstanding for me. I played in 36 matches and scored four goals, all decisive. But when you are past 30 other priorities cut in."

The defender blames his slow start at Madrid on the World Cup hangover that has affected so many other senior players. He says: "A lot of top clubs made a mixed start because their World Cup players were catching up on fitness and form. The players of Italy, France, Germany and Portugal [the semi-finalists] were all up to a month later coming back to work than players of nations eliminated in the first round in Germany.

"It really was an exhausting experience, both physically and mentally…but, of course, also highly rewarding."

THE REST OF THE TOP 10

2 Samuel Eto'o
Barcelona & Cameroon
A brilliant goalscorer in La Liga and the Champions League and an outspoken critic of racism in Spanish football.
Last year: 9th.

3 Thierry Henry
Arsenal & France
Loser in both major Finals of the year – the Champions League and World Cup. Earned praise for staying loyal to Arsenal in the face of Barcelona's advances.
Last year: 7th.

4 Ronaldinho
Barcelona & Brazil
The undisputed king of the world for the past two years but failed to shine for Brazil in Germany.
Last year: 1st.

5 Gianluigi Buffon
Juventus & Italy
In outstanding form during the *Azzurri's* victorious World Cup campaign – and stuck with Juventus despite demotion from Serie A.
Last year: not in top 10.

6 Didier Drogba
Chelsea & Ivory Coast
Shone in his country's first World Cup finals, and thrived at Chelsea in the face of Andrii Shevchenko's arrival.
Last year: not in top 10.

7 Juan Roman Riquelme
Villarreal & Argentina
A brilliant midfield creator for Argentina's new young stars in Germany, his international swansong.
Last year: 6th.

8 Miroslav Klose
Werder Bremen & Germany
Top scorer at the World Cup – and an increasingly impressive performer in the Champions League.
Last year: not in top 10.

9 Kaka
Milan & Brazil
One of the few creditable performers for Brazil in Germany, and consistently brilliant at club level.
Last year: 8th.

10 Deco
Barcelona & Portugal
Joined the select group of players who have won the European Cup with different teams, having also taken the trophy with FC Porto in 2004.
Last year: 10th.

World Manager of the Year Marcello Lippi

Italian maestro bides his time

MARCELLO LIPPI RESIGNED as Italy coach three days after his team's World Cup Final victory in Berlin on July 9. Since then he has spent time relaxing in his home town of Viareggio on Italy's Tuscan coast. He has denied stories linking him with Napoli and Milan, saying he will not return to coaching before June 2007, "because I don't want to take over a team in difficulty in the middle of a season".

Lippi has only ever worked in Italy, making his name at post-Maradona Napoli in the early 1990s and winning the Italian League and European Cup with Juventus in the second half of the 1990s. He won Serie A again in a second spell at Juventus between 2001 and 2004 after a frustrating interlude at Internazionale.

World Team of the Year Barcelona

More than a club

"MES QUE EN CLUB" (More than a club) is the motto that defines Barcelona and their relationship with the rest of the world. Barca's role as a symbol of Catalan nationalism is well known, but their victory in this year's Team award poll is attributed solely to their performances on the pitch.

Winning the Spanish League and Champions League were just reward for the club's loyalty to coach Frank Rijkaard after a slow start to his first season. The successes were also a vindication of their decision to build a side around Brazilian Ronaldinho. The explosive development of Samuel Eto'o and the emergence of teenager Lionel Messi has only enhanced their reputation as exponents of expansive, attacking football.

This is the first time Barcelona have won our Team award. Their previous European Cup victory came in 1992, the same year Denmark stunned the continent with their European Championship triumph, making them the obvious choice for the award. However, Barca beat world champions Italy to the prize this year.

Young Player of the Year Lionel Messi

Rise and rise of wonderkid

LIONEL MESSI, Barcelona's Argentinian wonderkid, was the clear winner in our Young Player category.

He burst on to the international scene in 2005 at the World Under-20 Youth Cup, but his performances in 2006 were interrupted by a succession of injuries, which kept him out of the Champions League Final in Paris and limited his impact at the World Cup. Nevertheless, his reputation has continued to grow.

The shaggy-haired Messi has been compared to Diego Maradona. "He's an idol and a friend," the teenager told *World Soccer* earlier this year.

Referee of the Year Horacio Elizondo

World Cup Final ref bows out

FROM START to finish, Horacio Elizondo was the leading official at the World Cup. The Argentinian took charge of the opening match and the Final. In between, he was not afraid to use his cards, sending off England's Wayne Rooney against Portugal and the Czech Republic's Tomas Ujfalusi against Ghana and showing 10 yellows in the Switzerland-South Korea game. Then, of course, came Zinedine Zidane's dismissal in the Final.

Retirement now looms for the 43-year-old PE teacher, who lists writing poetry as one of his interests. Elizondo was set to take charge of his final Argentinian league match, between Boca Juniors and Lanus, on the last day of the opening championship. He is now expected to join the ranks of the Argentinian FA, schooling the referees of the future, though he also has a lucrative offer to officiate in Qatar.

Triumph and scandal

Gavin Hamilton recalls the highs and lows of an eventful year

DATELINE

JANUARY

- Real Madrid sign Antonio Cassano from Roma, Maniche joins Chelsea on loan, Arsenal splash out on Southampton teenager Theo Walcott, Christian Vieri moves to Monaco, Ailton joins Hamburg, Robbie Fowler returns to Liverpool.
- Sven Goran Eriksson announces his intention to stand down as England manager after the World Cup.

FEBRUARY

- Carlos Bianchi is sacked as coach of Atletico Madrid, while Newcastle part company with Graeme Souness.
- Former Marseille midfielder Jean-Jacques Eydelie alleges that members of the 1993 European Cup-winning side were doped.
- Egypt win a record fifth African Nations Cup after beating Ivory Coast on penalties in the Final.
- Florentino Perez quits as president of Real Madrid.

MARCH

- In the Champions League first knockout round there are defeats for defending champions Liverpool (to Benfica) and Real Madrid (to Arsenal).
- Germany are thrashed 4-1 by Italy in a friendly in Florence.
- Stephen Keshi is sacked as coach of Togo.
- Francesco Totti's World Cup participation is jeopardised after he breaks an ankle.

APRIL

- In the Champions League quarter-finals, Milan gain a last-gasp victory over Lyon, Arsenal beat Juventus, Barcelona edge past Benfica, and Villarreal overcome Internazionale on away goals. Arsenal then reach their first Champions League Final after a nail-biting semi-final victory over Villarreal, for whom Juan Roman Riquelme misses a penalty. Barcelona beat Milan in the other semi.
- Barcelona draw with Real Madrid to effectively clinch the Spanish league title.
- Chelsea clinch a second successive Premier League title.

Agony...Ivory Coast lose the Nations Cup Final on penalties

IT WAS THE YEAR when Italy scaled the heights of the global game to win a fourth World Cup, only to find their moment of triumph overshadowed by outside forces and other events.

Off the pitch, the unfolding *Moggiopoli* scandal back home tarnished the victory. On the pitch, the enduring memory of the Final was of an angry, uncontrollable Zinedine Zidane butting Italy defender Marco Materazzi.

Just when a global audience of billions should have been watching Italian celebrations in Berlin's Olympic stadium, the whole world was left wondering why Zidane had self-destructed in such dramatic style.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter was nowhere to be seen at the presentation of the World Cup trophy to Italy captain Fabio Cannavaro, leading to suggestions – strenuously denied – that Blatter had not wished to be associated with an Italian success tainted by scandal.

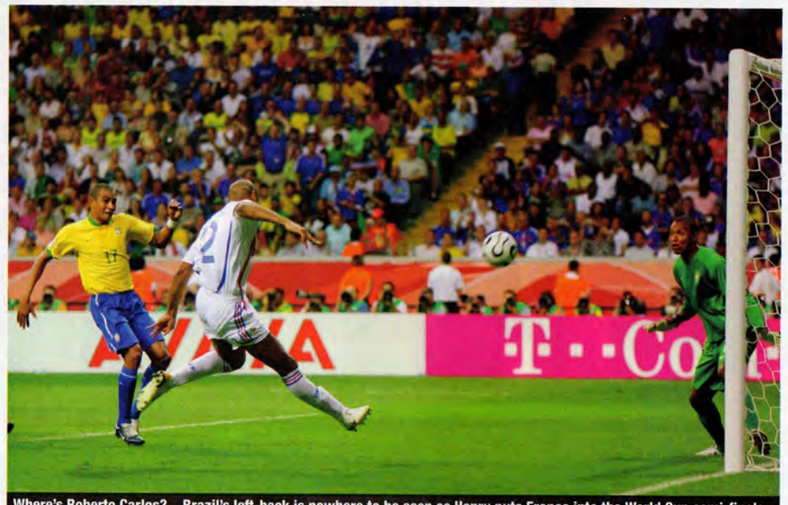
Before the World Cup, Blatter had described the scandal as the worst to hit football, while German organising committee president Franz Beckenbauer had suggested Italian football would pay dearly for it.

The scandal had broken in May after Italian newspapers published transcripts of taped telephone conversations between leading club administrators, notably Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi, referees and federation officials. The conversations revealed clear attempts by Moggi and others to fix the appointment of referees in favour of their respective clubs.

Italian federation president Franco Carraro was one of the first to resign, and as the World Cup progressed, so the scandal deepened. On the morning of Italy's tournament-defining semi-final against Germany in Dortmund, prosecutor Stefano Palazzi called for Juve to be relegated to "below Serie B" and stripped of their two most recent league titles, and for three of the other top six clubs – Milan, Fiorentina and Lazio – to be dispatched to Serie B.

Appeals inevitably followed after the initial punishments were handed out. Juve's relegation to Serie B was confirmed, but they began the season with a reduced 17-point penalty. Milan, Fiorentina and Lazio all remained in Serie A, albeit with minus eight, 19 and 11 points respectively. The points penalties were reduced even further for some of the clubs after another appeal.

Moggi was suspended from all football activities for five years, but Carraro's ban was commuted to a £54,000 fine and he continues as a member of the International Olympic Committee and, bizarrely, FIFA's internal audit committee.


Where's Roberto Carlos?...Brazil's left-back is nowhere to be seen as Henry puts France into the World Cup semi-finals

There were obvious parallels with Italy's previous World Cup victory, in 1982. In Spain, the Italian camp had developed a siege mentality after a match-fixing scandal back home. Twenty-four years later, the players again felt they had a point to prove. Italy's hotel in Duisburg was functional and unspectacular – unlike England's luxury base at Baden-Baden, which became a media circus starring the wives and girlfriends.

Purposeful preparations

Italy's purposeful preparations helped to reinforce the idea that a siege mentality had taken hold in the camp. "All the pressures only make us feel more motivated," Cannavaro said after the team's arrival in Germany. "Team spirit is very good and we are relishing the chance to silence our critics."

There the similarities with 1982 end. In Germany, the *Azzurri* defied the stereotypes with an attacking game. In the semi-final against the hosts, coach Marcello Lippi made attacking substitutions in extra-time when many expected him to shut up shop and play for penalties.

The script for the Final had been prepared in advance, with Zidane, the finest player of his generation, preparing to end his career with a second World Cup triumph. The Frenchman was officially selected as the player of the tournament by the world's media, but the poll had been conducted before the Final and Zidane's extra-time assault on Materazzi.

As Zidane finished his final match in disgrace, trooping off the pitch after being dismissed, it was left to Cannavaro to lift the World Cup and to take the plaudits as the tournament's best player.

It was fitting that Italy's best performers were a defender and a goalkeeper, Gianluigi Buffon. Germany 06 had the second lowest goals average in World Cup finals history, with just 2.3 per game. Italy's top scorers were Materazzi and Luca Toni, with two; Miroslav Klose of Germany was tournament top scorer with five.

It was a finals of two halves. The group phase featured some sparkling football, notably from Argentina and Spain, but often against teams who were just happy to have qualified. But when the serious stuff began in the knockout phase, caution – and exhaustion – set in.

Defending champions Brazil cruised through their group games, never breaking into anything like title-winning form. Striker Ronaldo broke Gerd Muller's World Cup record when he hit his 15th finals goal in the second-round defeat of Ghana. But it was the loyalty of coach Carlos Alberto Parreira to old favourites, such as Roberto Carlos, that proved Brazil's undoing. In the quarter-final against France, the veteran left-back failed to mark Thierry Henry at a free-kick, and the forward duly hit the game's only goal.

So the favourites went home earlier than expected – and to the inevitable inquest. In October, midfielder Kaka admitted that he should not have played against the French but hid the fact that he had an injured knee. "I told Parreira that I could play," he said. "It was my mistake. I was wrong to have played because when you play with an injury, it limits you. In the World Cup, you're amid all that euphoria and you don't know what might happen."

'This year's World Cup finals had the second lowest goals average'

Kaka also criticised Brazil's finals preparations in Switzerland, where paying crowds of around 5,000 people watched their training sessions. "One thing that got in the way was the number of people during the preparations," he said. "It affected the concentration of the players."

The departure of Brazil, the fizzling-out of Argentina's exciting early form, and the failure yet again of the African challenge meant that Germany 06 was, ultimately, a very European World Cup, with all four semi-finalists hailing from the continent, just as in 1982.

England disappoint

Of the European big guns, only England were a disappointment, with coach Sven Goran Eriksson paying the price for overdependence on Wayne Rooney, who was injured for the early part of the finals, and failing to inspire a squad who were undone by their overconfidence. Portugal, England's conquerors on penalties in the quarter-finals, provided one of the tournament's brightest young stars in Cristiano Ronaldo. He picked up the baton from Luis Figo, who retired from international football after Portugal's defeat to Germany in the third-place play-off.

On a negative note, the tournament was marred by play-acting and diving. It is debatable whether Italy should have progressed from their second-round tie against Australia after Fabio Grosso's dive won an undeserved penalty in the closing seconds. Similarly, Henry's theatrics for France won the free-kick from which Patrick Vieira scored their decisive second goal against Spain in the last 16.

The calls for retrospective punishment using video evidence grew ever louder. Blatter later apologised to the Australians, saying: "Italy did not deserve to get to the quarter-finals. The penalty was a mistake by the referee. The Socceroos should have gone to the quarter-finals in place of Italy."

The FIFA president, who admitted diving during his amateur playing days, also promised a summit meeting with the great and the good in a bid to "make football more attractive again".

So far, little action has followed from Blatter, just as FIFA's "For the Good of the Game" task force has produced few concrete developments. The task force was launched at FIFA's 2005 congress in Marrakech in response to the rising tide of negative headlines concerning multi-club ownership, corruption, betting and bribery. The *Moggiopoli* scandal only served to confirm the need for action. There were also match-fixing scandals in Belgium, Germany, France, Greece, Portugal, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

But just as FIFA tried to establish itself as the game's policeman, it was placed on the back foot by the latest revelations from investigative writer Andrew Jennings. In his book *Foul!*, he meticulously catalogued the excesses of FIFA's inner circle. His most damaging revelations centred on the collapse of ISL/ISMM, FIFA's former marketing partner, which handled the lucrative sale of World Cup TV rights before its bankruptcy in 2001. Jennings uncovered evidence that ISMM executives set up a slush fund to bribe influential FIFA executive members. Blatter and FIFA have denied the allegations but were unable to prevent the book being published in the UK and elsewhere.

FIFA's image has been further tarnished by allegations that Jack Warner, a FIFA vice-president and close ally of Blatter, personally benefited from the sale of World Cup tickets.

'There were match-fixing scandals from Belgium to Greece'

Further problems were presented to FIFA by the G-14 group of elite clubs, who finally flexed their muscles by backing the court case brought by Charleroi. The Belgian club are seeking compensation for injuries sustained by their Moroccan player Abdelmajid Oulmers while on international duty.

Both FIFA and UEFA are pinning their hopes on the review of European football currently being undertaken by Portuguese former government minister Jose Luis Arnaut. The challenge for the winner of January's UEFA presidential election between Michel Platini and incumbent Lennart Johansson will be to keep everyone onside.

The game's problems are not just financial. Racism forced itself to the top of the agenda, and the authorities have singularly failed to deal with the issue. UEFA have been toughest, banning Wisla Krakow defender Nikola Mijailovic for five matches for racially insulting Blackburn striker Benni McCarthy. But the Spanish federation has failed to censure national coach Luis Aragones, who made a racist

DATELINE

MAY

- Lyon celebrate a record fifth successive French league title by thrashing Le Mans 8-1 on the final day.
- Sevilla win the UEFA Cup Final, beating Middlesbrough 4-0 in Eindhoven.
- Barcelona win the European Cup for the second time, coming from 1-0 down to beat Arsenal 2-1 with goals from Samuel Eto'o and Juliano Belletti.
- Italian newspapers publish transcripts of taped telephone conversations between club bosses, referees and federation officials.

JUNE

- The World Cup kicks off, with hosts Germany beating Costa Rica 4-2 in the opening match.

JULY

- Italy win their fourth World Cup, beating France on penalties in the Final after a 1-1 draw. The match is overshadowed by the dismissal of Zinedine Zidane for butting Marco Materazzi.
- The verdicts after Italy's *Moggiopoli* inquiry are announced, with Juventus relegated to Serie B and stripped of their 2004-05 and 2005-06 league titles.

AUGUST

- Internacional beat fellow Brazilians Sao Paulo 4-3 on aggregate to win the Libertadores Cup for the first time.
- Chelsea sign Andrii Shevchenko, Michael Ballack and John Obi Mikel; Ruud Van Nistelrooy leaves Manchester United for Real Madrid, who also sign Fabio Cannavaro and Emerson from disgraced Juve; Barcelona sign Eidur Gudjohnsen, Lilian Thuram and Gianluca Zambrotta; Sergio Aguero joins Atletico Madrid.

Mobbed...Barca party after Belletti's Euro winner

On our way...Ceara hails Internacional's first goal, by Rafael Sobis, in the Libertadores Cup Final against Sao Paulo

comment about Thierry Henry, and has handed out extremely light fines to other offenders. Zaragoza were handed a mere £6,000 penalty after their fans racially abused Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o, who had to be persuaded from walking off the pitch in protest. The Cameroonian subsequently criticised the leniency of the punishment, saying: "It was practically the whole stadium. They are stupid, they buy tickets to watch games in which black footballers are playing. A severe punishment was needed to eradicate this problem from football, perhaps the closing of their stadium for a year."

Eto'o would have been a stronger candidate for the end-of-year individual awards had Cameroon qualified for the World Cup. The Indomitable Lions also had a frustrating African Nations Cup, going out in the quarter-finals to Ivory Coast, with Eto'o missing his spot-kick in the shoot-out that followed a 1-1 draw.

The Ivorians went on to reach the Final, where they lost on penalties to Egypt, the hosts, who thus won a record fifth continental title. Veteran Egyptian striker Hossam Hassan equalled the tournament record by competing in his seventh finals.

Hassan was one of a number of senior players who continued to defy the passage of time. Teddy Sheringham celebrated turning 40 with a substitute appearance for West Ham in one of the most thrilling FA Cup Finals of recent times, won by Liverpool after a penalty shoot-out. Former Brazilian international Romario headed to Australia for a stint with Sydney FC as he continued his quest to record 1,000 career goals. And Henrik Larsson – a decisive substitute as Barcelona won the Champions League Final in May – was lured away from Helsingborgs, to whom he had returned in the summer, to play on loan at Manchester United.

Generally, though, the focus has been on younger and younger players. The World Cup featured a post-war record number of debutants – including Ukraine, Ivory Coast and Ghana – but produced few new stars. Instead, it was the youth tournaments that showcased emerging talent. For instance, Ajax striker Klaas Jan Huntelaar was the star of the show as Holland won the European Under-21 Championship.

And another... Germany's Miroslav Klose was the World Cup top scorer

South American exodus

The long-established trend of South American youngsters crossing the Atlantic to join European clubs continued. Argentinians Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano made the journey from Corinthians of Brazil, but their destination, West Ham, was a major surprise. Yet, as with many aspects of the Media Sports Investments group, the company that owned the players' contracts, nothing was quite as it seemed.

Another Argentinian starlet, Sergio Aguero, joined Atletico Madrid from Independiente in the biggest transatlantic deal of the summer, while Rafael Sobis left Libertadores Cup winners Internacional for Real Betis.

The latest names to be linked with moves to Europe are Fernando Gago of Boca Juniors and River Plate's Gonzalo Higuain. They are both rumoured to be leaving in January for Real Madrid, who have already concluded a deal for Brazilian left-back Marcelo from Fluminense. The 18-year-old scored for Brazil on his debut – a September friendly against Wales at Tottenham's White Hart Lane. Two days earlier, Brazil had beaten Argentina 3-0 at Arsenal's new Emirates stadium in Dunga's second game in charge after replacing Parreira. Brazil's 1994 World Cup-winning captain selected a number of players overlooked by his predecessor, notably midfielders Elano and Daniel Carvalho and striker Vagner Love. All three play their club football in eastern Europe, having followed the game's new money trail.

The influx of cash into the Russian league in particular raised hopes that such clubs as CSKA Moscow could break the stranglehold of the western European clubs in the Champions League. But stability has been the name of the game across the continent.

For the first time, all five major European league titles were retained by the champions – Chelsea, Lyon, Bayern Munich, Barcelona and Juventus (though, of course, the latter were subsequently stripped of both their championships). PSV Eindhoven also achieved the feat in Holland, as did CSKA.

Stability has also been a feature in management, too, with more clubs now apparently realising the value of sticking with their coach through good times and bad. Alex Ferguson celebrated a remarkable 20 years at Manchester United, and Arsene Wenger 10 years at Arsenal.

The Gunners reached the Champions League Final for the first time despite the sale of Patrick Vieira to Juventus the previous summer. But they were not good enough to outdo Barcelona. The Catalan side delighted with some enchanting football during the year, not least from Eto'o and Argentinian teenager Lionel Messi. That was in contrast to the functional football played by billionaire-enhanced Chelsea.

The London club's transfer spending continues to exceed all their rivals'. No other club could afford to spend £30million on a 30-something striker, Andrii Shevchenko, or pay out £12million to Manchester United for a teenager, John Obi Mikel, to resolve a tug-of-war. Despite Chelsea's protestations that they have a long-term plan to become self-sufficient, they continue to rely on Roman Abramovich's generosity.

Sevilla, one of the few "new" teams to emerge in the past year, had to be content with success in the UEFA Cup. They beat Middlesbrough 4-0 in the Final in Eindhoven, but the competition is now a shadow of its former self. Even modest Italian side Livorno could not be bothered with it, their president Aldo Spinelli calling on his coach to field a weakened side in order to concentrate on domestic league matters.

A better indication of Sevilla's progress was their high finish in La Liga. But the club are one of the few to stress the importance of developing home-grown talent. For many others, finding a rich foreign benefactor has become the short cut to success. Aston Villa, Portsmouth and West Ham all came under foreign ownership in 2006, with Liverpool, desperate to keep up with high-spending, big-stadium rivals Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester United, actively seeking a Dubai buy-out.

In Austria, Dietrich Mateschitz, the businessman behind the Red Bull energy drink, brought cash and big names – Lothar Matthaus and veteran coach Giovanni Trapattoni – to Salzburg. He then extended his sporting network to Major League Soccer, buying New York/New Jersey MetroStars and renaming them New York Red Bulls. In the past month, CSKA Sofia have been acquired by Indian steel billionaire Pramod Mittal.

Looming large behind these takeovers is the cautionary tale of MSI, the secretive "investment vehicle" that took Tevez and Mascherano to Corinthians amid accusations, from Brazilian MPs, of money-laundering. MSI's front man, Kia Joorabchian, quickly followed his players out of the Sao Paulo club, but failed in a bid to buy West Ham, placing in doubt the long-term futures of the two players.

Donation to charity

Amid the dash for billionaires' cash, Barcelona maintained a dignified distance. They could even afford to donate £5m to global charity UNICEF as part of a five-year partnership. "It's an initiative with soul," said club president Joan Laporta. Barca can afford to be different, with their £670m TV rights deal with Mediapro, which is only eclipsed by the same company's recent £800m agreement with Real Madrid.

This year was one of profound change for Real, as the new regime of president Ramon Calderon and returning coach Fabio Capello brought a dose of realism to the club after the galactico-fuelled hedonism of the Florentino Perez era.

A third season without silverware – Madrid's worst run since 1953 – forced a rethink of the galactico policy and Perez's resignation as president. But Madrid continue to ape Manchester United in their global pursuit of cash. Summer tours of Asia and the USA are now a regular feature of pre-season preparation for leading European clubs. They bring in much-needed cash, from the sale of merchandise to new fans, but their usefulness for the team is questionable.

World Cup hangovers meant we saw the best of Rooney and Ronaldinho only in the final weeks of the year. Ronaldinho failed to live up to his reputation as Brazil failed to spark in Germany, but scored two of the goals of the year for Barcelona as 2006 drew to a close. The first, an overhead scissors-kick against Villarreal in La Liga; the second, a brilliantly deceptive free-kick placed below the jumping Werder Bremen wall in the Champions League.

'Blatter said Europe's season should run from February to November'

Injuries also deprived the World Cup of some of its brightest performers. Rooney, Shevchenko, Messi, Francesco Totti and Michael Ballack all went into the tournament carrying injuries or recovering from them. And the year ended with a dispute between Wenger and Arsenal captain Henry, who only a few months earlier had rejected the advances of Barcelona to sign a new deal with the Gunners. Wenger insisted Henry needed a rest after completing some 62 matches in the calendar year.

Meanwhile, Blatter waded clumsily into the debate with a suggestion – supported by very few – that the European football season should be shifted to run from February through to November.

Blatter has made better suggestions. Indeed he – and football – have had better years.

DATELINE

SEPTEMBER
- Inter great Giacinto Facchetti dies.
- There are surprises in the first Euro 2008 qualifying rounds, including Northern Ireland's 3-2 victory over Spain.
- A BBC investigation into alleged transfer bungs focuses on Bolton manager Sam Allardyce.

OCTOBER
- Michel Platini announces his intention to challenge Lennart Johansson for the UEFA presidency.

NOVEMBER
- Ferenc Puskas dies at the age of 79.
- Alex Ferguson celebrates 20 years as manager of Manchester United.
- Sao Paulo clinch the Brazilian national championship.
- Al Ahly of Egypt win a thrilling African Champions League Final against Tunisian underdogs CS Sfaxien.

DECEMBER
- Fabio Cannavaro is named *World Soccer* World Player of the Year, shortly after taking the European Footballer of the Year prize.
- Holders Barcelona avoid exiting the Champions League at the group stage by winning their final game against Werder Bremen.

Top deck...La Liga winners Barca on parade

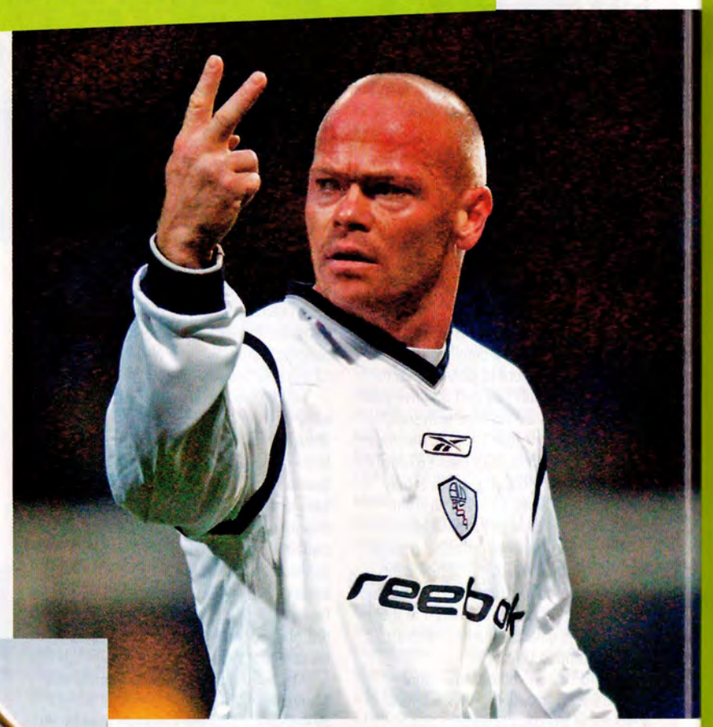
SO FAREWELL, THEN

- **Jimmy Johnstone,** Celtic winger, aged 61 (funeral pictured left)
- **Ron Greenwood**, England and West Ham manager, 87
- **Telmo Zarraonaindia,** known as Zarra, Athletic Bilbao and Spain striker, six times the league top scorer, 85
- **Peter Osgood,** Chelsea and England forward, 59
- **John Lyall,** West Ham manager, 66
- **Tele Santana,** Brazil coach, 74
- **Omar Oscar Miguez,** Uruguayan World Cup-winning forward, 78
- **Mohamed Abdel Wahab,** Egyptian international defender, 23
- **Giacinto Facchetti,** Italy and Inter full-back, 64
- **Glenn Myernick,** United States assistant coach, 51
- **Alberto Spencer,** Libertadores Cup all-time top scorer, 68
- **Sergi Lopez,** former Barcelona player, 39
- **Max Merkel,** Austrian coach of 1860 Munich and Atletico Madrid, 87
- **Ferenc Puskas,** Hungary and Real Madrid forward, 79

SIX of the best

Player autobiographies

1 Stig Tofting



WITH HIS CREW-CUT, barrel chest and aggressive instincts on and off the pitch, former Denmark midfielder Stig Tofting has never been one of football's cuddly figures. His 2005 autobiography, *No Regrets*, takes its title from one of his many tattoos and is as hard-hitting as you might expect.

Tofting, now with Danish top-flight side Randers, recounts numerous testosterone-fuelled episodes: his wild-child formative years on the streets of Aarhus, his friendship with the local chapter of the Hell's Angels, a road-rage incident and bust-ups at various clubs. Most notably, he writes about the jail term he served in 2003 after being found guilty of assaulting a Copenhagen restaurant manager during a night out with national team colleagues.

Raw emotion seeps from every page. Tofting speaks of the pain of losing his new-born son Jon to meningitis in 2003 and the day two decades earlier when he returned home to find his parents dead. For reasons unknown, his father had murdered his mother and then turned the gun on himself.

"I went into the living room and saw a body," Tofting writes. "I went closer and saw my dad with the gun he normally used for hunting lying close to his head. He was dead. I didn't have time to cry out…In the kitchen was the body of my mother. Straight away, I realised my dad had killed my mum and then committed suicide. Later I would be delivering newspapers with details of the case on the front page.

"I don't hate my father. I would just like to know why. Some days I don't even think about it. But I miss my parents. The day after the funeral I went to their grave. I've never returned."

2 Toni Schumacher

EX-WEST GERMANY goalkeeper Toni Schumacher certainly lit the blue touch paper when *Anpfiff* (Opening Whistle) was published in March 1987. His claim that doping was widespread in the Bundesliga caused outrage and brought furious denials from clubs nationwide. He instantly became persona non grata and was fired by his club, Koln, and blackballed by the national team, for whom he had featured for the previous nine years, winning 76 caps and also serving as captain.

According to Schumacher, Koln players used a variety of ephedrine-based substances before a big game in the autumn of 1984. He also claimed that during his early days at the club he served as chauffeur to the team's established stars, ferrying them to a doctor, where they would collect their pills or be injected.

"There were national team footballers who became world champions thanks to the effect of chemicals," Schumacher writes. "One of them was a Munich player whom we nicknamed 'The Walking Chemist'. He had a little knowledge of medicine and tried out all kinds of special concoctions on himself."

3 Roberto Baggio

IN HIS 2001 autobiography *Una Porta nel Cielo* (A Goal in the Sky), Roberto Baggio speaks extensively about the Buddhist faith he had been observing for the previous dozen years, explaining how it helped him face up to opponents ready to hack him down at every opportunity, countless injury problems and, of course, his famous penalty shoot-out miss in the USA 94 Final against Brazil.

But the memoirs of the "Divine Ponytail" are not solely concerned with the serenity he acquired from his Japanese spiritual master, Daisaku Ikeda. He also expresses his unhappiness about the way he was treated by certain coaches. Italy boss Arrigo Sacchi, Renato Ulivieri (Bologna) and Marcello Lippi (Juventus and Internazionale) all come in for a good deal of criticism, especially the latter. Baggio claims that on arriving at Inter, Lippi asked him to be his dressing-room spy, to tell him which players were against his appointment.

4 Eric Cantona

TWO YEARS before Eric Cantona's infamous kung-fu kick on a Crystal Palace fan and press conference when he spoke of trawlers, seagulls and sardines, the brilliant Manchester United forward combined tales of goals, tantrums and artistic tendencies in *Un Reve Modeste et Fou* (A Modest and Crazy Dream).

The Frenchman's multi-faceted character is here for all to see: the rebel banned from his national team in 1988 for calling coach Henri Michel "a bag of shit"; the painter enthused by oils and canvas; the sporting philosopher ("Football is a garden for all those who adore the game. Money and cheats have walked all over it"); the family man with deep roots in Provence; and, above all, the player who fell in love with the Premier League. "In England I discovered another world, where the dressing room was so incredibly relaxed before a big match, the fans were always loyal and we played a football both spectacular and physical."

5 Tony Cascarino

TONY CASCARINO'S *Full Time* is one of the best footballing autobiographies, not least because he and his ghost writer Paul Kimmage avoid cliche and banality.

From beginning to end, what shines through is the brutal honesty of the former Republic of Ireland striker. Absolutely nothing is off-limits here. Cascarino admits to long periods of self-doubt about his ability, a gambling addiction, the infidelities that led to the break-up of his marriage, and being injected with unknown drugs before games during his time at Marseille. He also questions his eligibility to play for the Republic, revealing that his Irish grandfather was not his mother's natural father – "I was a fraud. A fake Irishman."

The overriding impression is of a book written for therapeutic value. But it hits the mark for insight and entertainment, too.

6 Ferenc Puskas

IN THE MID-1990s, Liverpudlian author and academic Rogan Taylor visited Budapest to garner the memories of Ferenc Puskas. The resulting book, *Puskas On Puskas*, gives a fascinating glimpse into a remarkable player who revolutionised the game in the 1950s.

Puskas vehemently rejected the widely-held belief that he insisted on playing in the 1954 World Cup Final, a shock 3-2 defeat by West Germany, even though he was barely fit. And clearly he still had not forgiven Welsh linesman Mervyn Griffiths for flagging his late goal offside.

Puskas, who died last month, also told how the Hungarian public turned viciously on the team in the months following the Final. "There were lots of rumours and paranoid fantasies: we'd sold the game for a Mercedes car each, and such nonsense…We had to be protected in public, with a couple of police officers minding us."

Reviews by Nick Bidwell

Hidden agenda...Rummenigge fears G-14 is just about a handful of rich clubs protecting their interests instead of contributing to a united front

G-14: Good for what?

Rummenigge's comments raise more questions about the elite group's purpose

YOU CAN HEAR the cheering in Zurich and Nyon all the way from Brussels as FIFA and UEFA believe they spy the first cracks in the G-14 facade. For nearly seven years this talking shop comprising most of Europe's wealthiest clubs has sat on the periphery of the international game, making noises, creating suspicion and uncertainty, and waiting for the right moment to pounce.

But that was under Italo-Spanish leadership. Now that Arsenal's David Dein has taken over as chairman, a more subtle, conciliatory tone has entered the G-14 language. This could reap rich dividends if the European Court of Justice rules in favour of Charleroi – who are supported by G-14 – in the national team compensation case being fought over Abdelmajid Oulmers.

'Not enough is being achieved...we don't feel like paying an annual subscription for just sitting around'

It was a victory for G-14 when FIFA rushed in its own player insurance policy for this year's World Cup. FIFA president Sepp Blatter would never concede the point, but G-14's championing of the cause made the world governing body take the path of common sense (not always a FIFA speciality).

So, just when it appeared G-14 was making some sort of indirect progress in a sphere of some significance, it was all the more surprising that Bayern Munich's chief executive, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, should have raised doubts about its efficacy.

Certainly, all the clubs involved in the G-14 launch, in a Madrid casino in 2000, had expected to have become far more direct and strident players in the international arena by now. Perhaps Rummenigge was thus revealing latent frustration. Perhaps he was also revealing his frustration at realising – after sitting round a table with such figures as former Real Madrid president Florentino Perez – that Bayern were in a different financial league to some of the rest and it was not the international premiership.

Pure selfishness

Rummenigge was quoted as saying: "I am not certain whether G-14 has any value any more. Not enough is being achieved and there is no communication with FIFA or UEFA. From our point of view, we don't feel like paying an annual subscription for sitting around and talking about things when nothing comes out of it.

"The Spaniards, the Italians and the English are single combatants. In football pure selfishness rules. Probably, in 10 years' time, you will never again see a German club in the Final of a European competition."

Rummenigge then compared the annual domestic TV income of Werder Bremen, £15.5million, with that of their Champions League opponents Barcelona, £96.3m.

Later, he claimed he had been misquoted, no doubt after a constructive discussion with G-14's general manager, Thomas Kurth. But it was not so much the precise terminology that would have delighted G-14's enemies but the very fact that a respected figure such as Rummenigge had publicly voiced any doubts at all.

Bayern play a complex game at political level. Their president, of course, is Franz Beckenbauer, who has fingers in a number of pies. The club are as rich and powerful as most of the rest of the Bundesliga put together yet, domestically, must work contentedly with the other clubs when issues such as central marketing and distribution of TV rights are concerned. Internationally, Bayern are members of G-14 but, also, Rummenigge has worked diligently to develop the strength of the Club Forum, which UEFA developed as a wide-based antidote to G-14.

Bayern's double game illustrates the complexity of keeping professional football viable. The club want to generate as much income as possible through TV and sponsorship. However, Beckenbauer, Rummenigge and their associates – perhaps because of their own experience as players – appreciate that it takes two to make a football match. Bayern need competition with both Barcelona at one level and with Bochum at the other.

The reason is simple – for the foreseeable future the foundation of every club's existence lies in domestic competition. Clubs such as Arsenal have underlined the point by the manner in which their stadium financing has been mortgaged against weekly matchday income levels.

Does all this matter to the rest of the footballing world? Does it matter in Chile or China or Cape Town? The answer is yes, because the vast majority of the wealth of association football – more than 90 per cent at the last computation – is to be found in Europe. A shift in the power balance in Europe in the age-old club versus country dispute will have knock-on effects around the world.

Meanwhile, G-14 will also be keeping a close eye on the January duel for the UEFA presidency between incumbent Lennart Johansson and challenger Michel Platini.

Johansson has political wisdom, Platini has charisma. Johansson is burdened by questionable health, Platini is 30 years his junior. But Johansson is favourite because he developed the Champions League financial formula, which keeps the rich clubs lucratively onside and provides huge sums of consolation money for the clubs who never make the glamour stages of the competition.

Platini wants to open up potential access to the Champions League group stage to clubs from more middle-ranking nations. That is not what the big clubs want and they will press their national associations to swing voting support behind Johansson.

Chelsea problem

In the meantime, G-14 has a problem all its own – Chelsea. It is three years since Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich paid undreamed-of sums to take over the London club, pay off their debts and buy a wondrous collection of the world's finest players. Chelsea have bought from Juventus, Milan, Barcelona and Real Madrid, showing not even the most powerful clubs in G-14 can withstand Abramovich's money. He has been rewarded with two English Premiership titles and may well collect a third this season as well as the Champions League.

Yet, for all that wealth, Chelsea are not members of G-14, even though their chief executive, Peter Kenyon, was once a vice-president of the body while in his previous employ at Manchester United.

Clearly, Chelsea should be on board, but G-14's current 18-strong membership has a problem. The grouping is neatly balanced in terms of numbers, with the Big Three leagues – Italy, Spain and England – all having three members.

Bring in Chelsea and another Italian club and another Spanish one would be needed; bring in three new clubs and the dominance of the original founding fathers from Madrid, Milan and Turin would be further diluted.

Perhaps this is what Rummenigge really fears. As he sees it, G-14 is not about powerful clubs working in unison but about a handful of rich clubs protecting their own interests without a great deal of coherence or major success thus far.

Anfield saviour?...Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum

Liverpool need sheikh-up

WONDERFUL NIGHT that it was, winning the Champions League Final in Istanbul in 2005 produced a number of problems for Liverpool that are only now being addressed – almost too late. Victory over Milan was a triumph as surprising as it was dramatic because the Reds had finished "only" fifth in the Premier League and, in manager Rafa Benitez's first season, were short on class, skill and penetration by comparison with Europe's finest.

Liverpool's team were by no means the finished article. Benitez said, honestly and publicly, he was still building a side that would not be ready to challenge Chelsea and the other top sides in the Premiership for another two years at least.

But fans and media, their expectations raised to extreme levels, did not see it that way. They wanted new stars, and the club decided the way to raise the money to pay for them was to press ahead with long-dormant plans to build a bigger new stadium on a section of Stanley Park, close to the present Anfield ground. Many residents were opposed to this, though the plan has now been given the go-ahead by the council and Liverpool have also raised finance for the first stage of the project.

In the meantime, Benitez's team fight on as best they can in Premiership and Champions League but without the necessary top-class reinforcements. They fear missing out on Champions League football altogether next season, which would bring down the wrath of over-excited, over-expectant fans on not only Benitez but also David Moores, the millionaire chairman.

Now, however, a £450million takeover deal appears on the cards with Dubai International Capital, owned by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the world's fifth-richest man.

Steve Morgan, a local businessman who had long tried to muscle in on the club, warned that "if Liverpool do not obtain serious new money, Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal will disappear into the distance and we will never catch them again". Liverpool have already fallen badly behind in the race. Roman Abramovich began throwing fabulous sums of money at Chelsea in 2003; Manchester United have just extended their Old Trafford home to a 75,000 capacity; and Arsenal have just moved into their 61,000-capacity Emirates stadium.

Liverpool's new home, by contrast, will not be ready until August 2009 at the earliest and such a prospect may be seriously upset by failure to resolve the club ownership issue. Fans worry, with due cause, that neither Benitez nor captain Steven Gerrard has the patience to see out the game of boardroom chess. Liverpool need the sheikh more, perhaps, than he really needs them.

WS WORLD SOCCER GLOBAL VIEW Paul Gardner

Preparation? Who needs it?

Tickets to ride...Micky Adams (right) looks happy enough during his side's win at Queen's Park Rangers, whose manager John Gregory (centre) seems bemused by it all

Coventry's post-Tube trip win brings into question the "science" of pre-match routines

NOW, WHAT ABOUT THIS? Here's a coach telling it like it is, questioning the accepted wisdom of his own job, mocking it, really, exposing one of its sacrosanct rituals.

This is what Coventry City manager Micky Adams had to say about it: "Everyone talks about preparation but this proves it is a load of nonsense."

Bravissimo, Adams, for this shaft of clarity cutting through the murk of coaching twaddle. Here's how it came about. The bus taking Coventry to play Queen's Park Rangers got stuck in London traffic, so Adams, fearing a late arrival, had everyone jump off and take the Tube instead.

Something like a 45-minute ride, I'd think, followed by a 10-minute rapid walk to the stadium. The team arrived, no doubt stressed out and in a sweat, with 40 minutes to spare. But here comes the bit that doesn't make any sense. Coventry won the game 1-0.

Preposterous. But this sort of thing has happened before. Here are two examples.

In the summer of 1964, the Brazilians organised the four-team Taca das Nacoes (Cup of Nations) to celebrate their federation's 50th anniversary. But while Portugal and England agreed to attend, Argentina turned down the invitation. Brazil tried in vain to find a replacement, so they pleaded with Argentina to accept. Reluctantly, the Argentinians did so, sending a team that included a number of youth internationals and that had virtually no preparation time. They duly beat all three opponents – including a 3-0 wipeout of the hosts – to win the tournament.

'Could Adams possibly be right, could it all be a load of nonsense?'

Then there was the celebrated feat of Denmark, last-minute replacements for banned Yugoslavia in the 1992 European Championship. A hurriedly assembled team – coach Richard Moller Nielsen, as I recall, was busy decorating his kitchen when the call came – won the tournament in grand style.

Plenty to ponder here. Is elaborate preparation really necessary? Could it even be counter-productive?

There's a parallel, too, with the two schools of thought on what should be done when games are played at altitude. Either you spend a week or more training at altitude, making sure your bodies are fully adjusted to a low-oxygen environment, or you eschew any special preparation, fly in to the mile-high venue as close to kick-off as possible, and get out as soon as the game is over.

'Things have reached the stage where complicated preparation is now de rigueur. No team would dare not to do it, if only because everyone else is doing it'

Obviously, prolonged preparation for a game or a tournament brings its own problems. The all-time classic remark on that came from Brazil's Luis Pereira in the build-up to the 1974 World Cup in West Germany. Brazil were isolated in their mountain retreat outside Rio de Janeiro, cut off from all normal contact. To a visiting journalist, Pereira remarked scornfully: "This is supposed to make us world champions? Of what? Masturbation?"

Monastic concentrations

When teams can win major tournaments without the benefit of a training camp, you're entitled to wonder if the camps – to say nothing of the monastic concentrations that Helenio Herrera introduced into Italian league football – are worth the effort. Could Adams possibly be right, could it all be "a load of nonsense"?

We'll never know because things have reached the stage where complicated preparation, accompanied by its swarm of expert dieticians and physios and psychologists and trainers, is now de rigueur. You have to do it. No team would dare not to, if only because everyone else is doing it.

What gives all this special training a commanding authority is that it is judged to be scientifically authentic. It is vouched for by highly-trained experts who know what they're talking about and who are paid a lot of money.

For all I know technical studies have been done working out exactly what a player's adrenalin level should be in the dressing room before a game, and how you achieve that. Possibly the experts can so arrange matters that the on-the-field warm-up gives the optimum glycolysis rate for the muscles' Type 2B fibres. Possibly, though warm-up injuries are not unknown.

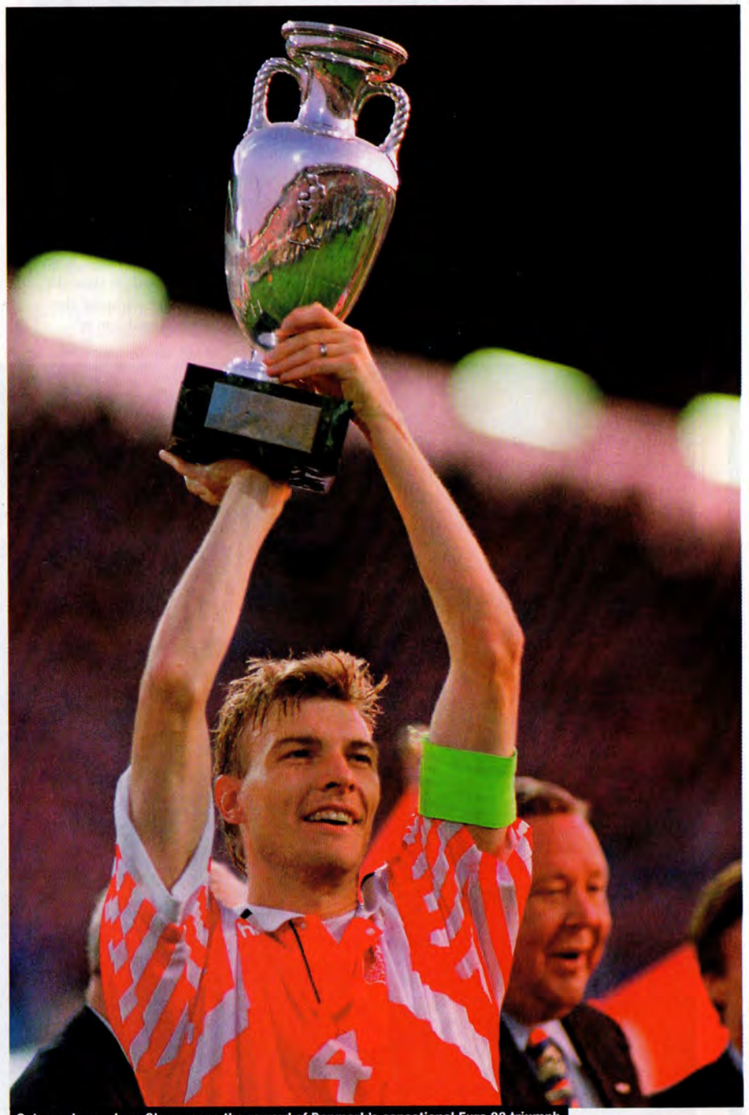
The scientific approach reached some sort of climax at last summer's World Cup, when Jurgen Klinsmann brought in an American fitness instructor, whose revolutionary methods included having the team gather in a circle and chant "We are a TEAM!" Though it did not escape my notice that when the scientifically fit German TEAM were forced into extra-time by both Argentina and Italy, it was the opponents who looked fitter and played the better football.

However, a distinction needs to be made between test-tube science – the research-based findings that emanate from laboratories – and a more pragmatic science based on observation.

So we're back in the company of the Tube-travelling Coventry players. Those guys won their game, remember. Their exploit is food for thought. Why shouldn't it be a good idea for players to be mixing with friends or families – on the train, the Coventry players were chatting with football fans – for up to an hour before the game? Maybe it would be a good idea to get all the players to park their expensive cars half a mile away and walk briskly to the stadium?

Just kidding – you can't have star players muscling their way through crowds right before a game. But the mere fact that Adams' players survived such an ordeal in excellent shape is something that science might want to look at. His method of pre-game tuning-up sure as hell wouldn't cost a great deal.

Which, of course, would count against it. As with all these heavily-researched wonder methods, you're not only obliged to use them because everyone else is, you'll expect to pay a lot of money for them. As with all miracle cures, there's always a suggestion that the more you pay the better the system must be. If it's cheap, it won't work! I'd love to know how much the German federation shelled out for Klinsmann's "We're a TEAM!" regimen. Quite a bit more than the 23 one-way Tube tickets that Adams bought, I'll bet.



Gatecrashers...Lars Olsen reaps the reward of Denmark's sensational Euro 92 triumph

WS WORLD SOCCER HOME FRONT David Conn

Couldn't play it again, Sam

Sam Hammam's hopes of creating a second Wimbledon with Cardiff have ended in tears

IN MY 10 YEARS covering English football's frenzied obsession with money, I have accumulated piles of big-talking documents – prospectuses for stock market floats, most of which failed; annual reports from clubs spending every penny they were making; accounts that itemised impending collapse. But the most bizarre, without question, is a brochure produced by Sam Hammam shortly after his takeover of Cardiff City in 2000, when the club were in the fourth division.

Entitled "Follow The Dream", it opened like this: "It cannot be happening. But it is, I am in a trance, dazed, swept off my feet, gobsmacked or perhaps hypnotised. In short, I am in love with Cardiff City Football Club.

"Having recently come out of a 22-year love affair with another club (which will always be my baby), I never thought that I would ever fall in love again. But I have!"

Pages of froth followed on Hammam's plan to rally the Welsh nation behind City, an idea he wanted to make concrete by changing the club's name, colours and logo. His suggested logo was a Celtic cross, featuring a dragon, a daffodil, the Prince of Wales' coat of arms, a bluebird – a nod to City's rather gentle nickname – the sword of 14th century Welsh warrior Owain Glyndwr and a cedar tree, signifying "prosperity based on strength" (Hammam is a Lebanese Londoner; the cedar tree is the national emblem of Lebanon). Around the centre of this dazed and confused symbol was his suggested new name for the club: Cardiff Cymru (Cymru meaning Wales).

Welsh appeal

Hammam said the club's colours should be the green and white of the Celts, and red for the dragon. "William the Conqueror defeated us [sic] in 1066," he wrote. "The Celts were driven to the extremities of the nation." Now, he wanted every Cardiff supporter to reach out and make it the club for all Wales, which fans from Swansea to Anglesey, in the far north-western corner of the country, would rally around.

At the time, I interviewed Vince Alm, one of the leading lights in City's supporter groups. He was a dedicated follower of Hammam, who was inspiring the fans to believe they could climb up the divisions to where they felt they belonged. "But we've told Sam all this Welsh stuff's a bit over the top," Alm said.

Hammam was finally told to turn down his rhetoric after the crowd trouble that overshadowed the 2-1 FA Cup third round victory over Leeds in January 2002. In "Follow The Dream", he wrote that for every away game "there should be a feeling that the 'Welsh Army' is crossing the border carrying the flag high and proud". It was gingerly pointed out to Hammam that some of City's hardcore needed no such encouragement, although their tradition of warfare had its roots more in the 1970s, soul music and Stone Island casual gear than Owain Glyndwr.

In among the misjudged rabble-rousing, about a Celtic nationalism which few in the Welsh capital care for, there was a shrewd core to Hammam's plans. He truly believed that Cardiff City could be a huge football institution, the Premier League's presence in Wales, a magnet for a whole country. Hammam also placed a curiously exact limit on the investment he would make: "A sum of £3,139,558.64 will be injected into the club as new capital," he wrote. "No more. It is a one-off."

The rest, he said, would have to come from the fans. They were dazzled, by the dream and the promises, and never questioned why Hammam was so precisely limiting the money he was putting in, which comprised £1.5million to pay off the club's existing debts, £1m to cover anticipated losses for the following two seasons, and just £0.5m for new players.

Everybody in football knew Hammam had money. The baby with whom he had enjoyed a 22-year love affair – not an image on which it pays to linger – was, of course, Wimbledon, the former non-league south London club he took over for less than £100,000 when they were in the fourth division and steered to the top flight for a remarkable 14-year stay. Wimbledon's extraordinary ascent was always tempered for football purists by the foulness that the "Crazy Gang" dished out on the field, but the club produced some very good footballers, including Nigel Winterburn, Dennis Wise, Dave Beasant, Warren Barton and Chris Perry, whom Hammam sold for millions to bigger clubs to balance the books.

Flying the flag...Hammam wanted to rally the whole of Wales behind Cardiff City

Rising up...AFC Wimbledon celebrate promotion to the Ryman Premier League, part of England's seventh tier

Supermarket sweep

The love affair ended bitterly, however, when Hammam dumped Wimbledon and left with all the money. He had transferred the Plough Lane ground to his own company, then, in 1998, sold it to supermarket Safeway for £8m with no new stadium, of which he had talked incessantly, in the offing.

Before that, he had sold 80 per cent of these one-time suburban minnows for a near-unbelievable £25m to Norwegian investors and powerboat racers Kjell Inge Rokke and Bjorn Gjelsten. They bought not the reality – a few thousand fans and a scrappy ground – but Hammam's dream of another national Premier League franchise, this one involving moving the club to Dublin. However, the FA in Ireland refused to sanction this, and the Norwegians were left with a club with no ground, making massive losses and that had seriously disillusioned fans. Hammam was paid another £1m for the rest of his shares, and the new chairman, Charles Koppel, drove through a rather less inspiring franchise move, to Milton Keynes. This was done in the face of overwhelming opposition from the fans, who then formed their own club, AFC Wimbledon, and began again down in the non-league pyramid, playing at Kingsmeadow, a south London ground formerly owned by Kingstonian, who were in administration.

Hammam is said to have then had 15 clubs begging him to take them over, but chose Cardiff precisely because he believed he could rally the Welsh behind them, fill a new ground, take another club to the Premiership and be, once again, a dazzling success, Sam the Man.

The dream faded to grey last March when City captain Graham Kavanagh was peremptorily sold to Wigan for £1m to pay the previous month's wage bill. City made it to the Championship – England's second tier – but not easily. It turned out Cardiff's rise was all done on borrowed money, £24m in "loan notes". At the same time, Hammam's company had been paid nearly £900,000 in "management fees".

Hammam brought in Peter Ridsdale, the former Leeds chairman – to many, an unlikely saviour from over-indebtedness – and Ridsdale duly delivered his unavoidable solution. If a new stadium was to be built and new investment introduced, Hammam had to go. Hedge funds now stand to cash in on Cardiff's future, not Hammam, and as things stand the team are in the mix for promotion.

He left lamenting that "tears have been shed" but that he was doing it all for his Cardiff "family". At Kingsmeadow, there were no signs of weeping.

'It cannot be happening, but it is. I am in a trance, dazed, swept off my feet, gobsmacked or perhaps hypnotised. In short, I am in love with Cardiff City'

Hammam gets overwrought in his introductory brochure

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DIGEST

NEWS AND REPORTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

WS WORLD SOCCER

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

No change at the top

Fooled you...Ronaldinho sends his free-kick under the leaping Werder Bremen wall to score Barcelona's first goal and put the defending champions on their way to the last 16

Saving grace...Celtic's Polish goalkeeper Artur Boruc keeps out Louis Saha's late penalty to clinch victory over Manchester United and a place in the knockout stages

THE REAL SURPRISE about the group stage of this season's Champions League was how few surprises it threw up. There were no big-name casualties to match the exit of Manchester United at this stage last season. Indeed, of the 16 teams who qualified for the knockout stages, only Celtic, PSV Eindhoven and FC Porto are not from Europe's top five leagues. The Glasgow side provided the only real upset when beating Benfica, quarter-finalists last term, to a qualifying place.

The bold challenge of eastern Europe, heralded at the start of the competition as proof of the Champions League's diversity, fizzled out. CSKA Moscow, Spartak Moscow, Shakhtar Donetsk and Steaua Bucharest all threatened to reach the knockout stages, but ultimately had to settle for a place in the UEFA Cup. Kyiv Dynamo and Levski Sofia finished bottom of their respective groups, without a win between them.

Group A promised fireworks after Chelsea and defending champions Barcelona were drawn together once again. Chelsea came out on top, having taken four points from their two encounters. Those results, and a draw with a stronger-than-expected Werder Bremen in Germany, left Barcelona needing to win their final game, at home to Werder, to qualify. But they managed it comfortably, 2-0, despite injuries to key players Samuel Eto'o and Lionel Messi. Ronaldinho scored with a brilliant free-kick, placing the ball under the jumping defensive wall, and began the build-up to a sweeping second goal, scored by Eidur Gudjohnsen.

Chelsea striker Didier Drogba was the key figure in the two Barcelona games. He hit the only goal of the clash at Stamford Bridge, then popped up to score a dramatic injury-time goal to snatch a 2-2 draw at Camp Nou.

The Ivorian also hit a hat-trick in the 3-1 win away to Levski, and his form helped to compensate for the slow start to Andrii Shevchenko's Chelsea career. The Ukrainian finally scored his first Champions League goal for his new club in the last group game, at home to Levski, who were the only side in the tournament to lose all six matches.

In Group B, Internazionale lost their first two games, away to Sporting Lisbon and home to Bayern Munich, but rallied to win their next three to book their last-16 place. Bayern qualified comfortably as unbeaten group winners. Late goals from Claudio Pizarro and Lukas Podolski in Milan gave them their first win against Italian opposition in eight years.

Spartak Moscow recorded their first victory on the final matchday, away to Sporting, to snatch the UEFA Cup place from the Portuguese.

In Group C, Liverpool and PSV shared a goalless draw in their opening game then won their next three each to qualify with two games to spare. In the most exciting game of the group, an acrobatic Peter Crouch volley gave Liverpool a 3-0 lead at home to Galatasaray, but the Turks pulled two goals back in a late surge.

Crouch was also on the scoresheet in the 1-0 win away to Bordeaux and the 2-0 home win over PSV that ensured Liverpool took top spot. In the final game, the Reds returned to Istanbul's Olympic stadium, scene of their 2005 Final triumph, but a weakened side lost to Galatasaray, who were winning for the first time. Bordeaux's emphatic 3-1 win over PSV ensured they took the UEFA Cup spot.

Valencia go through

Group D, which featured Valencia, Roma, Shakhtar and Olympiakos, looked as if it would be the most tightly contested, but the Spanish club qualified with two games to spare after taking 10 points from their first four.

Not surprisingly, Valencia fielded a weakened side in their last game, away to Roma, whose 1-0 win thanks to a header by veteran defender Christian Panucci secured them the runners-up spot. Roma had made life difficult for themselves after losing their penultimate game to Shakhtar, who then held out for a draw with Olympiakos to grab the UEFA Cup place.

Lyon and Real Madrid were drawn together, in Group E, just like last season, and both easily made it through once again. Lyon took the upper hand after beating Real 2-0 at home in the opening match and made sure of top spot by holding the Spanish club to a 2-2 draw in the penultimate round. Gerard Houllier's side finished unbeaten after a 1-1 home draw with Steaua Bucharest.

Madrid bounced back from that opening-day defeat by thumping Kyiv Dynamo 5-1 at home then Steaua 4-1 away. Ruud Van Nistelrooy scored late on in Bucharest to become only the third player to hit 50 European Cup goals, along with Raul and Shevchenko.

Steaua had offered much promise with an emphatic 4-1 win away to Dynamo in their opening match. It proved to be their only success but was enough for them to take the UEFA Cup place.

In Group F, Manchester United looked as if they might have to contemplate life in the UEFA Cup after going behind to a wonderful Nelson goal at home to Benfica on the final matchday. But they recovered, with headed goals by Nemanja Vidic, Ryan Giggs and Louis Saha clinching top spot and consigning their opponents to the UEFA Cup instead.

Celtic's home form proved to be decisive, winning all three games, while they lost all their away ties. The victories over FC Copenhagen and Benfica placed Gordon Strachan's side in a reasonable position and they booked their last-16 place with a 1-0 defeat of United thanks to Shunsuke Nakamura's brilliant free-kick.

Arsenal made a positive start in Group G but stumbled against CSKA Moscow, both home and away. The Gunners lost 1-0 in Russia then squandered a host of chances in the return and had to settle for a 0-0 draw.

FC Porto's 2-0 win away to CSKA on the fifth matchday left the standings delicately balanced. The Portuguese then secured their place in the knockout stages, along with Arsenal, after the two sides drew 0-0 in Porto, while Hamburg gained some pride and their first points by defeating CSKA 3-2 in Germany. The Russians were thus thrust down into the UEFA Cup, which they won in 2005.

In Group H, Lille squeezed into the knockout stages for the first time at the expense of AEK Athens after a dramatic final matchday. Milan had already qualified as group winners and fielded a second-string team for Lille's visit. The French side duly won, with goals from Peter Odemwingie and Kader Keita, while AEK could only draw 2-2 with Anderlecht. The fact that few Milan stars were on show was reflected in the fact that ticket prices were slashed to one euro in a bid to boost the gate.

Gavin Hamilton

Getting there...Hernan Crespo scores Internazionale's second goal in the 2-0 win over Siena that kept them flying high in Serie A

ITALY

Inter on course

IF INTERNAZIONALE do not win the Serie A title this season, in their own right, without the help of sporting courts, then they never will. A 2-0 win over Siena on December 2 kept them four points clear of Roma, with Palermo a further four points back and the rest of the field virtually out of sight.

It is 18 seasons since the *Nerazzurri* topped the standings after the final round – days when Lothar Matthaus and Andy Brehme put steel into midfield and defence, Aldo Serena was Serie A's top scorer with 22 goals, and Giovanni Trapattoni was coach.

Since 1989 Inter have won only the Italian Cup, twice; they took the league title last season by default, having finished third, because of the punishments handed out to Juventus and Milan after the match-fixing inquiry.

President Massimo Moratti recognises the wait for a genuine league title has been too long, even if he is rarely drawn into discussing it. "If we win the League again this season it will be a cause for especial celebration," he said after the Siena game, Inter's 11th successive victory in all competitions.

Nevertheless, Roma have maintained their pursuit in style, beating Milan 2-1 away for the first time in 20 years and then Atalanta at home by the same score. Captain Francesco Totti put in a superb performance in the latter game and hit both goals. No wonder there is increasing frustration among Italian fans as Totti continues to profess a lack of enthusiasm for playing for the national team.

That is bad news considering the world champions' fragile displays and results under Roberto Donadoni. Totti says: "Only Donadoni and I know the real reasons I am not playing for Italy."

But some are beginning to wonder if Totti is worried about the expectation that would crush his shoulders if he pulls on the *Azzurri* shirt again.

Vote of confidence

Milan's defeat was painful enough for coach Carlo Ancelotti but it was followed by a dreaded vote of confidence from owner Silvio Berlusconi.

Five years ago the former Prime Minister handed over day-to-day running of Milan to long-time aide Adriano Galliani, but the latter's suspension because of the match-fixing scandal and Berlusconi's election defeat have handed the media magnate more time to dabble in football.

That spells danger for Ancelotti, whose team are only slowly pulling away from the relegation fringe, not helped by the eight-point match-fixing deduction and four defeats in five games.

Berlusconi has already shown his interest in a re-involvement, with a hint that he hoped to bring Ukraine striker Andrii Shevchenko back from Chelsea. "I spoke to Sheva on the phone only a day or two ago," Berlusconi said, "and he told me he would really love to come back here." Shevchenko, of course, insisted that he was merely being polite.

Ancelotti is feeling the pressure – evident after the Roma defeat when, for once, it was possible to hear his voice raised in anger from outside the dressing room. He is no doubt aware of the increasing speculation that Frank Rijkaard, Marcello Lippi and Sven Goran Eriksson (in that order) are being tipped to replace him next summer.

The federation and the League also faced trouble when referees and assistants threatened to strike, their main grievance the two bodies' failure to fulfil a promise to pay match fees going back to January.

But advisors to federation executive commissioner Luca Pancalli found a late compromise amid fears that further turbulence would undermine Italy's uphill pursuit of hosting rights for Euro 2012.

FIFA official Stefano Farina headed a delegation on behalf of 41 referees and 88 assistants, who were rewarded with part-payments.

Serie A referees receive £2,400 per match, with each assistant being paid £650. Farina said: "We have not been given respect for the time and work we put in." He could hardly have been surprised, however. It's not as if Italy's referees emerged whiter than white from the match-fixing scandal.

Keir Radnedge

GERMANY

Koln comeback for Daum

SIX YEARS AFTER a dalliance with cocaine cost him the chance of coaching the national team, Christoph Daum is back in German football. The former Fenerbahce boss was appointed to succeed the sacked Swiss Hanspeter Latour at under-achieving second division side Koln, with whom Daum began his coaching career in the mid-1980s.

The club, relegated from the Bundesliga last May, were always a good bet to end Daum's exile, during which he has also coached Austria Wien and Besiktas. He is still revered by Koln fans for the success he brought them in his first spell – the team finished league runners-up in both 1989 and 1990 – and since quitting Fener at the end of last season had whiled away the hours in his villa in the suburbs of the Rhineland city.

Initially, though, Daum played hard to get. Twice he was approached by Koln president Wolfgang Overath and general manager Michael Meier, and twice he turned them down, saying a recent throat operation ruled him out.

Cynical sections of the media claimed he was holding out for a better offer from top-division Schalke, Hamburg or Borussia Dortmund. But Overath and Meier continued their charm offensive, city mayor Fritz Schramma made a personal appeal and 17,000 fans put their names to an online petition.

Daum's ego suitably massaged, a U-turn was not long in coming and a three-and-a-half-year contract was agreed. Koln could begin to celebrate the return of their "Messiah".

"I listened to my heart," Daum explained. "I didn't feel comfortable with my original refusal. The doubts kept surfacing. Finally, emotion was the decisive factor."

The coach faces a mammoth rebuilding job, with Koln stuck in mid-table, short on quality players and confidence. But if anyone can do it, he can. Daum has a terrific track record in German football – he steered Stuttgart to the title in 1992 and has been a runner-up five times, with Koln and Bayer Leverkusen – and there is no one better at forging a team that shows spirit and elan.

Daum's legendary single-mindedness was apparent from his first training session. Most new coaches would have been delighted to see hundreds of euphoric fans there to greet them. Daum, on the other hand, was livid. "It was like a Christmas market," he fumed. "Dogs running around, mobile phones ringing. It's not on. It's not professional. I don't want exhibitions. I'd rather work without the public."

Mixed reception

Reaction to the return of the fallen hero was mixed. Franz Beckenbauer, whose club, Bayern Munich, were so frequently the target of Daum's taunts, was surprisingly welcoming, saying: "Daum is a world-class coach, even if he didn't have a playing career to speak of. He fires up his players, gets them to improve. His men are ready to do anything for him. That's important in a world where football is entertainment as well as sport."

Federation chief Theo Zwanziger was more circumspect, saying: "Daum made a mistake and deserves a second chance. But he needs to work on his credibility. He has a way to go yet."

Another man on the comeback trail is Bayern midfielder Sebastian Deisler, out for eight months with damaged cruciate ligaments. He marked his first-team return, as a substitute, by creating both goals in the 2-1 victory at free-falling Hamburg.

How Bayern must wish they could find a way to keep Deisler healthy, to have more use of his nimble ball skills and inventiveness. Indeed, he might be a world star by now if he had not suffered two career-threatening knee injuries and a spell of chronic depression in the 2003-04 season.

The club's midfield has lacked precision, ideas and a player capable of changing the tempo. Coach Felix Magath knows only too well a remedy has to be found if they are to keep pace with Bundesliga pacesetters Werder Bremen and Schalke.

Nick Bidwell

Back in the frame...Daum and assistant Roland Koch are the focus for media attention after the coach's return to Koln

HOLLAND

PSV eye title hat-trick

Headline news...Timmy Simons nods home the winner against Ajax to put PSV top of the table

PSV EINDHOVEN are on course for a third successive league title after leapfrogging Ajax with a 1-0 win in Amsterdam. Ronald Koeman's side played with 10 men for the last 20 minutes after the dismissal of Edison Mendez but never looked in danger of losing their lead. Timmy Simons scored the winner in the 63rd minute, turning in a Mendez free-kick.

PSV then enjoyed two big home wins – over Excelsior (4-0) and Utrecht (5-0) – while Ajax fell further behind after only drawing 1-1 at home with Twente then losing 3-0 at lowly Sparta Rotterdam. AZ rose to second but were five points behind PSV at the start of December.

Despite PSV's good showing in the domestic league and the Champions League – they qualified for the last 16 with two games to spare – they did not supply a single player for Holland's friendly against England in Amsterdam. That is not surprising, however, since eight of the regular starting line-up are foreigners while Phillip Cocu has retired from international football. National coach Marco Van Basten did originally select Ibrahim Afellay, but the midfielder asked for a time-out since he is still undecided about whether to play for Holland, his country of birth, or Morocco, his parents' homeland.

Clarence Seedorf was a shock inclusion, having been neglected by Van Basten for two and a half years because of his so-called movie-star attitude. But the Milan midfielder won a place because of an injury to Ajax's Wesley Sneijder. There had also been a big media campaign for his recall, and Seedorf expressed his desire to play for Holland again.

Rafael Van der Vaart, unusually playing as a right-winger, scored late on to earn a 1-1 draw.

Den Haag are facing heavy punishment after a pitch invasion by their fans forced a home game against Vitesse to be abandoned. Den Haag, who were bottom at the time, were losing 3-0 when about 150 supporters ran on to the pitch in the 67th minute. The following day, under-pressure coach Frans Adelaar stood down, with assistant Lex Schoenmaker taking the reins.

Surprisingly, Den Haag then beat Groningen 5-2 away to climb above RKC Waalwijk, who promptly sacked their coach, Adrie Koster, leaving assistant Adrie Bogers as caretaker boss. RKC had won only once in 14 league games, but did cause an upset in the Cup when beating Feyenoord 3-2 in the second round, adding to the Rotterdam club's miserable season.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

BELGIUM

Finals chances up the Pole

The national team look set to miss out on a major finals for the third successive time after losing 1-0 at home to Poland in the Euro 2008 qualifiers. Central defender Daniel Van Buyten was at fault for the 18th-minute goal, dithering instead of putting the ball out of play, allowing Radoslaw Matusiak to dispossess him and go on to score.

Belgium dominated possession but did not force a corner until the 89th minute and there was a glaring lack of creativity. To make matters worse, captain Timmy Simons and fellow midfielder Bart Goor both picked up yellow cards, ruling them out of the trip to Portugal in March.

Bottom side Lierse have appointed Norwegian Kjetil Rekdal, their former player, as coach following the sacking of Rene Trost. The Dutchman received his marching orders after a 4-0 defeat at fellow strugglers St Truiden, the team's 10th loss in 12 league games. Their other two matches were goalless draws.

By contrast, St Truiden were embarking on a three-game winning run under new coach Henk Houwaart that lifted them to mid-table. Houwaart had replaced Thomas Caers.

Genk were four points clear of second-placed Anderlecht and still unbeaten at the start of December but will have to do without Croatian forward Ivan Bosnjak for the rest of the campaign after he tore cruciate knee ligaments in a collision with Mouscron goalkeeper Mark Volders.

Another Croatian, Bosko Balaban, hit all Club Brugge's goals in a 4-1 defeat of Zulte-Waregem.

Nicholas Harling

SWITZERLAND

Schallibaum's short shrift

Marco Schallibaum lasted just 47 days as coach of Sion after controversial president Christian Constantin swung the axe yet again.

"He has only himself to blame," Constantin said as he tried to explain the summary execution of his 10th coach in as many seasons. "Promoted this season, we even headed the table for a while. But then the rot set in and we slumped into mediocrity."

The president acted after seeing his team pick up only seven points in five matches. He claimed team morale had sunk to an all-time low after Schallibaum publicly questioned the players' commitment after a 5-1 thrashing by St Gallen.

Schallibaum's predecessor, Argentinian Nestor Clausen, quit in October after accusing Constantin of interfering in selection and tactics.

The new coach is Pierre-Albert Chapuisat, father of now-retired national team striker Stephane. Chapuisat senior, who has coached a string of second division clubs, made a good start, with Sion beating visitors Thun 3-0 to go second in the table, three points behind Zurich.

Ivar von Rulach

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Three out of four for Shels

Shelbourne won the championship for the third time in four years after yet another nail-biting finish as Derry City missed out on the final day for the second year running.

Shels went into their last game, against Bohemians, level on points with Derry, but knew they just had to match their rivals' result since they had a vastly superior goal difference. However, a mistake by keeper Steve Williams early in the first half allowed Bohemians to take the lead and it looked as if it might all end in tears. But Shels fought back, Stuart Byrne equalising from the penalty spot and then former Bohemians player Glen Crowe hitting the winner.

Derry also won, 1-0 at home to defending champions Cork City, but it was not enough and manager Stephen Kenny left to take the reins at Scottish Premier League side Dunfermline.

Cork's defeat allowed Drogheda United to jump above them into third place with a 1-0 defeat of bottom side Waterford United, who then lost 3-2 on aggregate to Dundalk in the relegation/promotion play-off.

However, Dundalk and second level champions Shamrock Rovers are not guaranteed promotion. The administration of the League is now moving to the FAI, who will decide on the Premier Division make-up by examining several criteria over the past four years, not just results.

Shelbourne's Cameroonian midfielder Joseph Ndo has been voted Player of the Year by his fellow professionals, the first foreigner to win the award.

Sean Connor left Sligo Rovers to take the reins at Bohemians following the departure of Gareth Farrelly and was replaced by Rob McDonald.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Big interest in top job

More than 50 coaches have applied for the national team post, including former FC Zurich boss Gilbert Gress, Hans-Peter Zaugg (ex-Neuchatel Xamax), Walter Hormann (a previous national coach) and Hannes Bongartz (ex-Kaiserslautern and Monchengladbach).

The position was vacated by Martin Andermatt in October after he agreed to coach Young Boys of Berne; the FA will name the new man in January. Interim boss Urs Meier has returned to his job at Zurich.

Graeme Crawford

AUSTRIA

Rapid in free-fall

RAPID WIEN, the country's record champions, have dropped to the foot of the top division for the first time in their 107-year history. The club went into December three points adrift of Grazer AK after yet another defeat, 1-0 at Mattersburg. Under-pressure coach Peter Pacult vented his frustration after the game, saying: "The ref was against us. Their winner should have been disallowed, and we were deprived of a clear penalty."

Pacult was appointed in September after Rapid took only seven points from their first seven games under Georg Zellhofer. But the former 1860 Munich player and coach has clearly failed to turn fortunes around, winning only one of his first 12 league games in charge.

President Rudolf Edlinger has defended his decision to switch coaches, saying Pacult "took over in a very difficult situation and had to work with a team he did not set up in the first place". However, the coach has been roundly criticised for what appeared to be over-intensive training sessions and his rotation policy.

Edlinger has dispensed with sporting director Peter Schottel, while promising to buy new players. Top of Rapid's shopping list is striker Dragan Bogavac, currently with German second level side Wacker Burghausen. But they will need to sell in order to raise the cash, with defender Markus Katzer likely to move to Aston Villa.

Harry Miltner

Point of order...but Pacult has failed to arrest Rapid's slump

On top of his game...Helder Postiga

PORTUGAL

Porto power on

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS FC Porto strengthened their stranglehold on the League in November with a run of four wins. Coach Jesualdo Ferreira has clearly managed to find the balance that was missing at the start of the season, even with Brazilian playmaker Anderson on the sidelines.

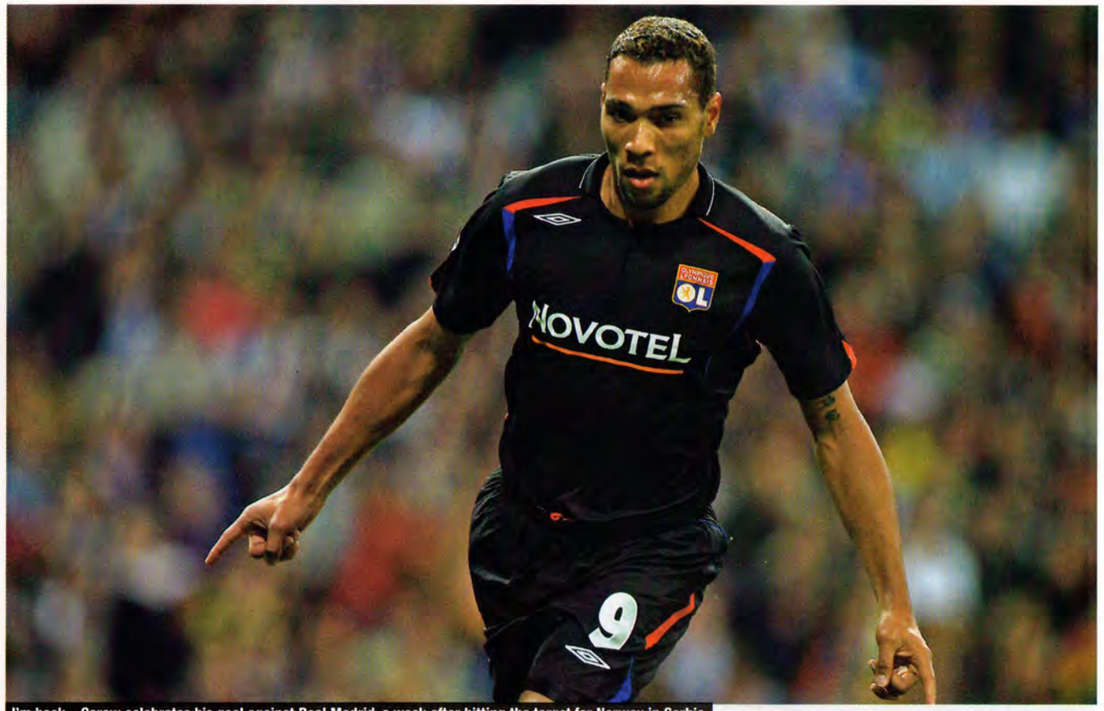
The team's success stems in part from the resurgence of Ricardo Quaresma and Helder Postiga. After a slow start, they have turned on the style and have been involved in most of Porto's goals in recent weeks.

At the start of December Porto led by two points from Sporting Lisbon, who appear to be the only side capable of challenging the Dragons. Paulo Bento's young but already experienced side shook off the disappointment of Champions League elimination by winning their last three domestic league games in November.

Benfica, the other traditional big hitters, were nine points behind Porto, but with a game in hand, after losing away to the champions at the end of October and then at Sporting Braga.

The latter rose to third on the strength of that win even though they have been forced to switch coaches. Carlos Carvalhal stood down in early November, citing personal reasons, and was replaced by Rogerio Goncalves, who impressed when guiding unfancied Naval into the top five.

Pedro Pinto



I'm back...Carew celebrates his goal against Real Madrid, a week after hitting the target for Norway in Serbia

NORWAY

Carew still cutting it

JOHN CAREW has quickly found his form after months of injury problems, hitting a terrific goal in Norway's friendly against Serbia in Belgrade and notching a similar effort for Lyon at Real Madrid in the Champions League the following week.

National coach Age Hareide was forced to field a virtual B team against the Serbs because of injuries, but they nevertheless put in a strong showing in the 1-1 draw. Carew, deputising as captain, cancelled out Nemanja Vidic's early strike when latching on to a pass from deep from Christian Grindheim, brushing aside two defenders and blasting the ball into the top corner.

The forward also shone for his club in the 2-2 draw in Madrid, scoring after leaving World Cup-winning captain Fabio Cannavaro in his wake.

The annual post-season coaching cull has begun in earnest, with Frode Grodas and Arild Stavrum the first to go, at relegated Ham-Kam and Molde respectively. Former IFK Gothenburg boss Arne Erlandsen has replaced Grodas.

Surprisingly, co-coaches Uwe Rosler and Gunnar Halle were forced out at Lillestrom despite the team's fourth-place finish. Tom Nordlie, who had helped Viking avoid relegation, was quickly installed, with Rosler, ironically, taking the Viking reins.

The Cup Final was a one-sided affair, Fredrikstad beating Sandefjord 3-0, all the goals coming in the first half. Raio Piiroja scored twice just before the break after Hans Erik Ramberg's fifth-minute opener.

Odd Grenland retained their top-flight place after thrashing Bryne 10-1 on aggregate in the relegation/promotion play-off. Youngster Tarjei Dale scored five of the goals.

Second-level champions Stromsgodset have signed winger Stian Ohr from Molde and goalkeeper Espen Johnsen from Rosenborg. Aalesund are the other promoted side.

Sigurd Odegaard

DENMARK

Copenhagen cruise clear

Coach Stale Solbakken feared that FC Copenhagen's Champions League campaign might have a detrimental effect on the defence of their domestic title. But the series of high-profile and high-pressure matches in Europe appeared only to inspire the club to greater heights at home. With the League now in its winter break, Copenhagen have a six-point lead over second-placed Midtjylland, while usual title challengers Brondby are 19 points off the pace in seventh.

The Brondby board were forced to give a public vote of confidence to Dutch coach Rene Meulensteen following a 3-1 defeat at Copenhagen in early November. But Brondby then proceeded to lose two of their last four games before the break – 1-0 at OB Odense and 2-0 at lowly Randers.

Jim Holden

ICELAND

Magnusson moves on

The FA are searching for a replacement for president Eggert Magnusson following his appointment as chairman of West Ham. FA general secretary Geir Thorsteinsson is among the front-runners to take the post, which Magnusson had held since 1989. The latter will also have to relinquish his position on UEFA's executive committee.

League runners-up KR have lined up a major transfer coup, to bring in national team midfielder Peter Marteinsson from Swedish club Hammarby. Marteinsson has been abroad for 11 years, with Norway and England his other two ports of call.

Rab Christie

SWEDEN

IFK go back to the future

IFK GOTHENBURG have turned to old favourites to try to bring back the good times after a mediocre eighth-place finish in the League. New co-coaches Jonas Olsson and Stefan Rehn are relatively inexperienced in management but played more than 200 league games each for IFK during the 1990s, when the club dominated the domestic game.

Arne Erlandsen stepped down as IFK boss in September, with assistant Kjell Pettersson becoming caretaker.

Djurgardens, the 2005 champions, have named former Iceland star Siggi Jonsson as their new coach.

Brommapojkarna beat Hacken in the relegation/promotion play-off to reach the top flight for the first time.

Daniel Andersson created a rare family double when he captained Sweden in a 1-0 friendly defeat by Ivory Coast in Le Mans, France. His brother Patrik, now retired, also captained the team.

Pentti Hietanen

Common goal...IFK's new team of Rehn, Olsson and assistant Teddy Olausson

You can't catch me...scorer Mika Nurmela leads Armenia's defence a merry dance

FINLAND

On top for winter

FINLAND WENT INTO the winter break on top of their Euro 2008 qualifying group and still unbeaten after a 1-0 win over Armenia in Helsinki. The visitors proved a tough nut to crack, however, and though veteran midfielder Mika Nurmela scored after eight minutes, it was the Armenians who did most of the attacking and forced Jussi Jaaskelainen to make a couple of world-class saves.

"Armenia were a positive surprise," said coach Roy Hodgson. "We have to be satisfied, especially as we were without key players like Jari Litmanen, Teemu Tainio and Mikael Forssell." The Finns have conceded only two goals in five matches, underlining Hodgson's reputation as a skilful tactician and organiser.

HJK Helsinki won the domestic Cup, beating KPV Kokkola 1-0 in the Final, but have lost full-back Veli Lampi to FC Zurich.

Long-serving Liverpool and national team defender Sami Hyypia has been named Finnish Player of the Year.

Pentti Hietanen

ESTONIA

Tartu mix takes on Tallinn

Tartu, the country's second largest city, has a real prospect of ending Tallinn teams' title stranglehold after the merger of its two top-flight clubs, Maag and Tammeka.

"We've had enough of our clubs being mid-table. Now we have to get a place in Europe," said Sergei Ratnikov, coach of the new entity, Maag-Tammeka. Maag finished fifth in the 10-team division last season, one place above Tammeka.

The merger was good news for Tulevik Viljandi, who will fill the spare top-flight berth despite having lost to Kalev Tallinn in the relegation/promotion play-off.

Coach Sergei Yuran shocked TVMK by quitting to take charge of Shinnik Yaroslavl in his native Russia just days after outlining his plans for the next Estonian league campaign. Yuran had been at the Tallinn club for just three and a half months.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Green light for Baltic League

The Baltic League, featuring the best four clubs from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, is to go ahead next year despite the withdrawal of main sponsor Fedcominvest. The announcement was made following a meeting of the tournament committee in Riga. The event is due to kick off in March.

FK Riga kept their Premier League place after beating FK Valmiera 5-0 on aggregate in the relegation/promotion play-off.

Andres Must

SCOTLAND

Happy New Year!

Scottish football is enjoying a long-awaited resurgence, with the national team going into the new year on top of their Euro 2008 qualifying group and Celtic and Rangers both now certain to be involved in European competition after Christmas for the first time in 35 years.

Celtic's 1-0 defeat of Manchester United put them into the last 16 of the Champions League for the first time. Meanwhile, Rangers made it into the UEFA Cup knockout stages after taking seven points from their first three group games. Their relative success in Europe suggests French manager Paul Le Guen is more at ease with that style of football than the domestic championship, in which Rangers were trailing leaders Celtic by 16 points in early December.

Alan Fairley

WALES

Bangor bash the leaders

Steve Bleasedale got off to a fine start as Bangor City boss with a 4-0 win over leaders Llanelli, ending their unbeaten run this season. Bleasedale took the reins after the resignation of Clayton Blackmore, who has taken charge of Porthmadog. The result allowed Rhyl, 4-0 winners over Airbus UK, to go above Llanelli by a point.

The top-level clubs have voted to retain the division's 18-team structure rather than see it split in two.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bottom two ditch bosses

Jim Hagan became the first managerial casualty of the season when sacked by Larne after the team slipped to second bottom following a 5-0 defeat at Linfield. The former Celta Vigo and Birmingham defender, who had been in charge for seven months, has been succeeded by former Larne captain Paul Curran.

Hagan's dismissal was followed by that of Jim Gardiner at bottom side Loughgall. Gardiner had been in charge for six years and guided them into the top flight in 2004. However, they were without a league win since April and had taken only three points from their first nine games this season.

Captain Keith Percy and several other players boycotted the team's next league match, away to Linfield, in protest at the sacking. A makeshift side duly lost 7-0.

Roy Kitson

TURKEY

Restaurateur claims he cooked title clincher

Money man...Oskay alleges he bribed Samsunspor to lose to Fenerbahce

A RESTAURATEUR and part-time journalist has rocked Turkish football by claiming he bribed Samsunspor to throw their home game with Fenerbahce on the final day of the 2000-01 season to ensure the latter won the title. Cihan Oskay said he was a friend of Fenerbahce chairman Aziz Yildirim, whom, he claimed, told him to ensure the match finished with the "correct result".

Fener were three points clear of Galatasaray going into the last round and duly clinched the championship with a 3-1 win.

The club, who were pipped to the title by Galatasaray last season after a final-day defeat, have denied the claims. An official said: "If we were able to do such a thing we would not have lost last season." Samsunspor also deny any wrongdoing.

The federation and the state prosecutor's office in Samsun have both begun to look into the allegations. Sports Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin urged the federation to mount a thorough investigation otherwise he would order a government inquiry.

However, it is thought that the federation's legal advice will be that there is no point in taking things further since the alleged incidents happened more than five years ago, making it impossible to impose any sanctions even if Oskay's claims were proved to be true.

Mircea Lucescu, Galatasaray's coach in 2000-01, said the accusations proved he had been right when he complained while working in Turkey that corruption was crippling the game. "They told me I was mad when I was saying such things," said the Romanian, now in charge of Ukrainian champions Shakhtar Donetsk. "I have been waiting for someone like this to come forward. This makes me as happy as winning the title...I would never return to work in Turkey because I know I would just be facing the same nonsense I had to live through before."

Suna Erdem

GREECE

Rivaldo takes responsibility

Olympiakos appear to be on course for a third consecutive domestic title, but that form is in stark contrast to their showing in the Champions League. They failed to reach the knockout stages after taking only two points from their first five games, leaving the squad to reflect on what had gone wrong.

"We are all disappointed," said star Brazilian Rivaldo. "I have a share of the responsibility because when I came to Olympiakos I promised we would do well in Europe. I have some thoughts about what went wrong, but I would rather tell the management at the right time."

Lou Economopoulos

SERBIA

Low-flying Eagles

The national team have a new nickname – the Eagles – but they hardly soared in their last match of the year, a 1-1 draw in a friendly against Norway in Belgrade. Javier Clemente's team, formerly known as *Plavi* (Blues), were less than convincing.

Defending champions Red Star Belgrade lost their unbeaten league record when going down 2-0 at Vozdovac in early November but then won the next three matches to open up a 10-point lead over Mladost.

Red Star's traditional rivals Partizan are already 12 points adrift. The Black and Whites even added a psychologist to their coaching staff in the hope that it would help turn their season around but the defeats have kept coming. Partizan's 1-0 home loss to Vojvodina in late November was their fifth in 15 league matches.

Vladimir Novak

MONTENEGRO

Zeta to the fore

Zeta had the better of their three meetings with fierce rivals and league leaders Buducnost within the space of a fortnight, winning 3-2 on aggregate in the Cup and holding the leaders to a 0-0 draw away in the championship.

Buducnost also stuttered in their next league game, managing only a 1-1 draw away to Petrovac, allowing Zeta to close to within three points at the end of the autumn campaign.

Vladimir Novak

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Blaz bows out at last

Blaz Sliskovic's tenure as national coach is finally over, in the wake of the 4-0 home Euro 2008 defeat by Greece in October, after a number of "will he go, won't he go" moments in recent months. Sliskovic offered to quit following the 3-1 home loss to Hungary in September, but the federation refused to accept it.

The coach twice almost steered the team to major finals – Euro 2004 and this year's World Cup – but they just missed out both times. Defeat in two of their first four Euro 2008 qualifiers suggested they would fail again. Sliskovic will now concentrate on his club role, in charge of Zrinjski.

Zdravko Reic

Head first...Gal Alberman nips in front of Croatia's Marko Babic to get in an effort on goal during Israel's Euro qualifying defeat

ISRAEL

Croats end home run

CROATIA ENDED ISRAEL'S seven-year unbeaten home record when winning a see-saw Euro 2008 qualifier 4-3. The Israelis took an early lead through Roberto Colautti but were then put to the sword by the deadly finishing of Brazil-born Eduardo Da Silva, who hit a hat-trick.

Israel coach Dror Kashtan came in for stinging criticism after he tried to casually dismiss the defeat by saying the crowd had got value for money, having seen seven goals.

Beitar Jerusalem went into December on top of the League under new coach Yossi Mizrahi. The former goalkeeper was poached from SC Ashdod following the sacking of Osvaldo Ardiles after only three months in the job following a run of mediocre results.

Hapoel Tel Aviv's shock 4-2 UEFA Cup win away to Paris Saint-Germain was overshadowed by the fatal shooting of a PSG fan by a policeman after the match. The officer was apparently coming to the rescue of a Hapoel supporter whose life was reportedly in danger after being surrounded by an angry mob of home fans.

Derek Fattal

CROATIA

Dinamo turn to Ivankovic

FORMER IRAN COACH Branko Ivankovic has taken over at Dinamo Zagreb after the league leaders decided to dispense with Josip Kuze.

The club were unhappy about Kuze's failures in Europe (a 5-1 aggregate defeat by Arsenal in the Champions League third qualifying round and a 5-2 defeat by Auxerre in the UEFA Cup first round) and the fact that, even in domestic competition, the team have not been as impressive on the pitch as they look on paper.

Ivankovic, who led Iran to the World Cup in Germany, previously assisted Miroslav Blazevic when in charge of the Croatian national team.

Struggling Cibalia were looking for a new coach after Ivica Matkovic was suspended for six months for hitting the referee after a 1-0 defeat at Varteks. Matkovic subsequently resigned.

Zdravko Reic

Stepping in...Ivankovic

SLOVENIA

Oblak makes way

Branko Oblak has quit as national coach after two years following Slovenia's sluggish start to the Euro 2008 qualifying campaign. They lost 3-0 to Bulgaria and 4-2 to Belarus, both away, offset only by a 2-0 home win over Luxembourg.

That, added to failure to qualify for the World Cup last summer, was in stark contrast to the achievements of Oblak's predecessor, Srecko Katanec, who steered the team to the finals of Euro 2000 and the 2002 World Cup.

Former international Darko Milanic was the favourite to take the coaching reins.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Katanec stays upbeat

National coach Srecko Katanec has not lost hope of qualifying for Euro 2008 despite the recent 2-0 home defeat by Russia. "There are still seven games to play," the Slovenian said. "If we beat Croatia in Rijeka in March we will be back in the running."

Katanec faced the Russians without suspended key players Goran Pandev and Ilco Naumoski. "It's the same as if Barcelona had to play without Ronaldinho and Eto'o," the coach said. "We don't have adequate alternatives on the bench."

He also blamed the pitch at Skopje's City stadium for the team's lack of goals. They have not scored there since March 2005 and not won there for more than two years.

In the League, champions Rabotnicki beat Makedonija 3-2 to end their 25-game unbeaten run but went out in the cup quarter-finals to second-level leaders Milano.

Michel Stojmanovski

CYPRUS

God on our side

The national team sensationally held Germany to a 1-1 draw in Nicosia in mid-November to rise to fourth in their Euro 2008 qualifying group. This came six weeks after an impressive 5-2 win over the Republic of Ireland, and Greek coach Angelos Anastasiadis, who had been under pressure, is now being hailed as a hero. Anastasiadis, renowned for his religious devotion, not surprisingly said the results were a gift from God, but also praised the players for their effort and commitment.

Soulis Theodosiou

MALTA

Marsaxlokk's straight eight

Marsaxlokk extended their league winning run to eight games with a 4-0 defeat of lowly Marsa to increase their lead over Msida to four points.

The national team, on a high from their 2-1 Euro 2008 qualifying defeat of Hungary in October, were brought down to earth by a 4-1 loss at home to Lithuania in a friendly.

Domenico Aquilina

I won't be gagged...Lucescu was banned for three games and fined for his outburst

UKRAINE

Lucescu attacks Surkis 'collusion'

SHAKHTAR DONETSK coach Mircea Lucescu is at the eye of a storm after accusing federation president Hryhorii Surkis and his brother, Kyiv Dynamo president Ihor Surkis, of colluding to appoint referees favourable to the Kiev club.

The Romanian spoke out after Shakhtar lost 1-0 at Dynamo in a crunch championship game, during which he himself was sent off. "Ukrainian referees are protecting Kyiv Dynamo, and this is bad for the game," Lucescu said. "For me, the federation and Dynamo are the same body because they are governed by brothers. Referees must be appointed by an independent organisation."

The coach was sent to the stands just before half-time for remonstrating with Portuguese referee Paulo Gomes after he sent off Shakhtar defender Dmytro Chygrynskyi for a foul on Dynamo forward Kleber. According to Lucescu, the Brazilian had provoked his player.

The coach compounded the situation by sarcastically applauding the Surkis brothers, who were sitting together in a VIP box, and shouting "bravo, bravo, federation". He was banned for three games and fined £3,750.

Shakhtar owner Rinat Akhmetov backed Lucescu, saying Hryhorii Surkis's strong connection with Dynamo was a "clear conflict of interests". Subsequently, Boris Kolesnikov, head of the federation's Donetsk branch, declared he would demand Hryhorii's resignation, saying: "Hryhorii Surkis brings shame to the whole of Ukrainian football. The word corruption is stamped on his forehead."

Maxim Shatskikh scored Dynamo's winner against Shakhtar to put his side six points clear and on course to wrest the title back. The Kiev side are desperate for success after a disastrous Champions League campaign (one point from five group games) and the fact Shakhtar have won the domestic championship for the past two seasons.

However, Dynamo's troubles are far from over. Ihor Surkis stripped goalkeeper Olexander Shovkovskyi of the captaincy after he failed to attend the home Champions League tie against Lyon, a 3-0 defeat. Shovkovskyi was suspended for the game but Surkis clearly expected him to be present. "Our reserve keeper [Olexander Rybka] was injured and the third-choice [Taras Lutsenko] is inexperienced and needed a word of support," said Surkis, who installed veteran Serhii Rebrov as the new captain.

Meanwhile, Rybka was banned for 10 matches and fined £2,700 for kicking CSKA Kyiv's Serhii Matyuk after they collided in a reserve game. CSKA coach Yuri Maxymov, a former Dynamo star, then ran on to the pitch and hit Rybka, earning a ban for the rest of the season and a £2,700 fine.

FC Kharkiv coach Volodymyr Kulaev has quit after poor results; the new man is ex-Zorya boss Volodymyr Bessonov.

Oleg Zadernovsky

ROMANIA

Becali handed record ban

The federation has banned controversial Steaua Bucharest owner Gigi Becali for a record 18 months for making insulting comments about the CFR Cluj club and two match officials – referee Sorin Corpodean and linesman Miklos Naghi – who had been in charge during Steaua's 1-0 defeat by city rivals and league leaders Dinamo. Becali was also fined £2,600.

The ban means the owner cannot represent Steaua in dealings with other clubs, the federation or the League.

Former national team defender Dan Petrescu, coach of promoted Unirea Urziceni, was banned for four games after being sent off for repeatedly protesting about refereeing decisions during his side's 1-1 home draw with Dinamo. The 38-year-old ex-Chelsea defender has had a troubled autumn, having been sacked by Wisla Krakow in mid-September after some disappointing results.

Steaua reached the UEFA Cup last 32 for the third season running by securing third place in their Champions League group. "This was the best we could expect when facing such high-level teams as Lyon, Real Madrid and Kyiv Dynamo," said coach Cosmin Olaroiu.

Dinamo lost their unbeaten record at CFR Cluj, going down 2-1, but were still 11 points clear of Steaua in second as the League shut down for winter.

Radu Timofte

CZECH REPUBLIC

Chairman charged with murder

Marila Pribram chairman Jaroslav Starka has been arrested on charges of abduction and murder in a dramatic police operation, later shown on national TV. Starka, long rumoured to have underworld connections, is accused along with six other men of the killing of businessman Lambert Krejcir.

Officials of the top-flight club have angrily rejected suggestions that Pribram would face financial ruin should Starka be convicted.

In the League, a resurgent Sparta Prague went clear at the top after beating Plzen 1-0 at home while former leaders Slovan Liberec lost 2-1 at Banik Ostrava.

Zlin's Petr Ulicny and Slovacko's Jiri Plisek are the latest coaching casualties. Ulicny was sacked, and replaced by Pavel Hoftych, following a run of poor results, while Plisek resigned, against the wishes of his cash-strapped club, with the team rooted to the bottom of the table.

One of Czech football's most famous names, Dukla Prague, looks set to make a return to the professional ranks. The former army club, who have recently been playing in the capital's regional leagues, have just bought the playing licence of second division side Jakubcovice.

Milan Baros scored with a stoppage-time header to earn the national team a 1-1 draw in a friendly against Denmark, their final game of the year. Liberec keeper Marek Cech had mixed fortunes on his debut, the opportunity coming because of the injuries to first-choice Petr Cech and regular reserve Jaromir Blazek. The new man was arguably at fault for Peter Lovenkrands' goal in the first half and also gave away a penalty late on but atoned by saving Daniel Jensen's spot-kick. Zenit St Petersburg midfielder Radek Sirl also made his debut for the Czechs.

Sam Beckwith

POLAND

Matusiak on form for club and country

THE NATIONAL TEAM made it three wins in a row in the Euro 2008 qualifiers by deservedly beating Belgium 1-0 in Brussels. Poland had more goal chances than their hosts and were well-organised in defence. Radoslaw Matusiak scored in the 18th minute when dispossessing defender Daniel Van Buyten and slipping the ball past keeper Stijn Stijnen.

The result puts the Poles a point behind Group A leaders Finland and level with Serbia, who have a better goal difference and a match in hand.

After the game, defender Jacek Bak claimed that before kick-off he had received a phone call offering him money to fix the match. Bak, who plays for Al Rayyan in Qatar, was unwilling to publicly divulge any more details but UEFA have begun an investigation.

Matusiak had more reasons to celebrate since his club, GKS Belchatow, were the surprise leaders as the League shut down for winter, three points clear of Legia Warsaw, Zaglebie Lubin and Korona Kielce. Belchatow showed their title credentials when beating defending champions and favourites Legia 2-1 earlier in the season. They also overcame Wisla, champions from 2003 to 2005, 4-2 in Krakow, ending their hosts' remarkable five-year, 73-game unbeaten home league run.

Belchatow were 10th last season, their highest finish in only their third top-flight campaign. Their current position is a triumph for coach Orest Lenczyk, who built the team without any big-money buys. During his reign, Matusiak, the League's joint-highest scorer with nine goals, has become a key man for Poland, while midfielder Lukasz Gargula has also made the national team ranks.

The town of Belchatow, in central Poland, has a population of only 62,000, but GKS receive strong financial backing from the local coal mine and power station. The club are yet to win major silverware, though they reached the Cup Final in 1996 and 1999.

Dariusz Kurowski

Winner...Matusiak celebrates his goal against Belgium

BULGARIA

Levski top and bottom

Levski Sofia are the "winter champions", going into the break two points clear of city rivals CSKA and still unbeaten after 15 rounds. Their domestic form was a far cry from their Champions League showing; defeat in their first five group games meant they will not even have a UEFA Cup place as consolation.

The national team ended the year with an embarrassing 3-1 friendly defeat in Slovakia after which coach Hristo Stoichkov declared that some of the players "don't deserve to wear the national shirt".

Former Levski player Georgi Ivanov has been arrested for alleged cigarette smuggling. The 39-year-old, who won the championship in the mid-1990s, is currently a coach with third level Devnya.

Rumen Paytashev

On high...CSKA are champions again

RUSSIA

CSKA scrape it

CSKA MOSCOW won the title for the second year running but were far from convincing, failing to beat either of their two main title rivals, Spartak Moscow and Lokomotiv Moscow, during the course of the season. In fact, Spartak finished level on points with the army club, who lost 2-1 at home to Dinamo Moscow on the final day. But CSKA held on to the trophy because they had won more games.

The champions also had to face down allegations of match-fixing relating to their 1-0 home win against Zenit St Petersburg on November 5. Daniel Carvalho scored from a highly dubious penalty, while Zenit forward Andrei Arshavin had two goals disallowed by questionable offside decisions. The accusers, however, could proffer no evidence of bribery.

Zenit finished fourth but Dick Advocaat's side are poised to make a stronger challenge next term. The club are lavishly sponsored by gas company Gazprom and reportedly have a transfer kitty of up to £20million. A chunk of that has already been spent on national team forward Pavel Pogrebnyak from Tom Tomsk. The fee was officially £1.4m, but reports suggest the true sum was £3.5m, a record for a Russian player between two Russian clubs. Also, Arshavin, named the League's Most Valuable Player of the season, has signed a new four-year contract.

Torpedo Moscow, relegated for the first time in their 70-year history, and bottom side Shinnik Yaroslavl will be replaced by Premier League debutants Khimki, from the Moscow suburbs, and Kuban Krasnodar.

Victor Gusev

BRAZIL

Sao Paulo, so predictable

POSSIBLY THE MOST unremarkable Brazilian championship in its 35-year history came to a predictable end as Sao Paulo, who led for the last two-thirds of the contest, wrapped up the title with two games to spare. A 1-1 draw with Atletico Paranaense brought the *Tricolor* their third major trophy in two seasons, following the Libertadores Cup and Club World Cup last year.

It was a sign of the times in Brazil that pundits attributed Sao Paulo's success to infrastructure and planning rather than individual players, inspired coaching or style of play. The club's state-of-the-art facilities and the fact they managed to keep the core of last year's team together were cited repeatedly as major factors that led to their triumph.

The team were solid but unremarkable – for example, the leading scorers were reserve striker Lenilson and goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni (a free-kick and penalty specialist) with eight goals apiece. Their top player was defensive midfielder Mineiro.

This was a far cry from 2002, when the brilliance of then little-known youngsters Diego and Robinho propelled Santos to a memorable triumph; or 2003, when the subtle skills of midfielder Alex inspired Cruzeiro; or last year, when Carlos Tevez masterminded Corinthians' run to the title.

Brazilian football, however, has now entered a new phase. The fans had long become used to seeing established stars move abroad but could still enjoy a few years of the newcomers before they were snapped up. But with European clubs pouncing earlier, even that pleasure is being denied.

This year 18-year-old left-back Marcelo established himself at Fluminense. He was given an early call-up by Brazil, scoring on his debut against Wales, but seemed to lose interest on returning to his club and was duly sold to Real Madrid without having played a full season at home.

On top...forward Leandro celebrates Sao Paulo's title triumph by scaling one of the goals at the last home game

Pato a revelation

The only other revelation was 17-year-old Alexandre Pato, who made his debut for Internacional in their penultimate game against Palmeiras, scored in the first minute, set up two more goals and hit a post.

Internacional sensibly delayed his debut until he had signed a contract until the end of 2008, but any foreign club prepared to cough up the £10million buy-out clause can take him before then.

Even the older players can suddenly disappear if they make an impact. Botafogo striker Dodo was in the running for the championship top scorer award early on – until he accepted an offer from Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates.

Even so, it took several weeks before his total of nine goals was overtaken. The award eventually went to Souza, a journeyman at Goias who hit 17 goals in 38 games, a modest total for the winner.

The relegation battle was equally humdrum. Santa Cruz and Fortaleza were down with three matches to play and joined by Ponte Preta and Sao Caetano, whose fate was sealed with a game left.

Traditional big clubs Palmeiras and Fluminense did their level best to liven things up by repeatedly losing and getting dragged into the dogfight. Luckily for them the teams below were even worse.

Sao Paulo have now won the title four times, a record they share with Flamengo, Corinthians and Palmeiras. Flamengo also claim to have won a fifth title in 1987 but the federation officially recognises Sport Recife as champions for that year, which was marred by political turmoil.

Brian Homewood

COLOMBIA

Huila's ups and downs

Atletico Huila found themselves in the bizarre situation of challenging for the closing championship title and playing to avoid relegation at the same time because of the country's policy of basing relegation on average points gained over the past three years. Huila had finished fifth in the closing season's regular stage to qualify for the eight-team play-offs. But their poor record in previous campaigns plunged them into a relegation fight.

Although the club managed to secure their top-flight place by beating promotion candidates Valledupar 3-0 on aggregate, they lost two of their first three championship play-off pool games. The League confirmed Huila would have been relegated if they lost to Valledupar, even if they won the title.

Brian Homewood

BOLIVIA

Winners lose out

Jorge Wilstermann won the year's second championship, but will have to wait a year to take part in the Libertadores Cup following a botched attempt to change the timing of the domestic season.

Last year, the authorities announced they were switching from a calendar-year season to a Europe-style August-to-July campaign. To do so, they held a transitional championship in the first half of 2005, followed by the 2005-06 opening championship from August to December last year. This was won by Blooming, who thus qualified for the 2007 Libertadores. However, in January, the decision was reversed, so the first championship of this year became the 2006 opening tournament, won by Bolivar, who will also go into the continental tournament. What Wilstermann won was the 2006 closing championship, but it was too late to change the criteria for the Libertadores places.

Brian Homewood

CHILE

Carry on, Acosta

Nelson Acosta will stay on as national coach for another year. He had initially announced his resignation hours before a 3-2 friendly win over Paraguay in November, apparently believing there would be no place for him under new federation president Harold Mayne-Nicholls. However, he did a U-turn after Mayne-Nicholls offered him the job for another year.

Brian Homewood

URUGUAY

Refs' anti-violence stand

The country's referees refused to officiate at games over one weekend in protest at an ugly incident during a reserve team game between Rampla Juniors and Miramar Misiones. Referee Claudio Alvarado required eye surgery after having chalk thrown in his face, reportedly by a member of Rampla's medical team, whom the official had just dismissed from the bench.

"This is the drop that has made the glass overflow," said referees' spokesman Olivier Viera. "Violence and the incitement to violence has become routine and it happens where people don't notice it, in the lower divisions. It's time to stop waiting and make sure these things stop happening."

Brian Homewood

CANADA

Sutton dives to Toronto

National team keeper Greg Sutton is moving to Toronto FC, the new Major League Soccer club, after six impressive seasons with United Soccer Leagues club Montreal Impact.

"I have won a cup, had great years and won individual awards in this league so there wasn't much challenge to hold me here," said Sutton, who will be 30 next April. "I am looking for new goals in my career."

Toronto have acquired four other Canadian internationals – defenders Adam Braz (also from Impact), Chris Pozniak and Marco Reda (Norwegian clubs Haugesund and Sogndal respectively), and midfielder Jim Brennan (Southampton).

The new club, who are coached by former Scotland striker Mo Johnston, have also brought in two established MLS stars – Ronnie O'Brien from FC Dallas and Edson Buddle from New York Red Bulls.

Philippe Germain

Doing it by the book...Cardozo and assistant Jorge Amaya start work at Olimpia

PARAGUAY

Cardozo turns to coaching

FORMER NATIONAL team striker Jose Cardozo has decided to end his playing career and become the latest coach of troubled Olimpia. The 35-year-old had intended to join the club as a player but his registration was rejected by the federation. So he took up an offer to replace boss Oscar Paulin instead.

Olimpia, three-times Libertadores champions, are one of the country's big two clubs, along with Cerro Porteno. However, they have hit a slump since Oswaldo Dominguez Dibb resigned as president three years ago and removed the club's main source of cash. ODD, as he is usually known, had effectively financed Olimpia during a stormy reign of nearly 30 years.

Brian Homewood

ARGENTINA

Chaos and confusion

ARGENTINA'S HOOLIGAN fans have struck again, dragging the opening championship into chaos.

In September, Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata's home game against Boca Juniors was suspended at half-time, with the hosts leading 1-0, after referee Daniel Gimenez claimed he had been threatened by Gimnasia president Juan Jose Munoz.

The remaining 45 minutes were played on November 8, before which a group of Gimnasia fans reportedly arrived at their team's training session threatening to shoot the players in the legs if they did not lose to leaders Boca since a win would favour title challengers Estudiantes, Gimnasia's arch-rivals.

The players seemed to take the threat seriously, since within a minute Boca were level after being awarded a penalty. They scored three more as Gimnasia offered little resistance.

The following Sunday, the Avellaneda derby was suspended after 64 minutes with Independiente 2-0 ahead when police lost control after visiting Racing Club fans rioted.

The Buenos Aires provincial government promptly announced it would no longer police matches. In response, the FA blocked ticket sales, meaning effectively only home club members and season ticket holders could attend for the rest of the season.

Clubs and fans protested about the decision. But the players, who had considered striking because of security worries, voted to carry on if security was assured and all fans allowed back. The FA, with government backing, agreed, and it was back to square one.

Eric Weil

Falling down...Boca's Palacio hurdles Gimnasia's San Esteban in the resumed match

Big surprise...Khalfan Ibrahim was a controversial winner

ASIAN PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Little-known teen named Asia's best

TEENAGE QATARI STRIKER Khalfan Ibrahim was the shock winner of the Asian Player of the Year award as the continent's leading individual honour continued to be clouded in controversy. The 18-year-old, who plays his club football with Doha's Al Sadd, is a relative unknown but finished ahead of Saudi Arabian international Mohammed Al-Shlhoub and Kuwait's Bader Al-Mutawa after amassing the most points in a new system implemented by confederation president Mohamed Bin Hammam.

"I was not expecting to win because the other two were more experienced than me, but I have to thank God," Ibrahim said. "I don't want it to affect me in a negative way. I'll look to keep calm and control my emotions and keep playing the way I have been."

Hammam was seeking to create a formula he believed would select the continent's best performers. Under the system, those players named man of the match in games played at the World Cup, in Asian Cup qualifying and in various other competitions, including the UEFA Champions League, received points on a weighted basis. However, the men charged with selecting the man of the match at most games – the match commissioners – are viewed by many to be ill-qualified to judge the performances of the players.

Japan's Shunsuke Nakamura has made a significant impact with Celtic in both the Scottish League and the UEFA Champions League, and South Korea's Seol Ki-hyeon has impressed in England with high-flying Reading. But there were no nominees from east Asia on the initial list of 10 candidates, which was whittled down to three.

"It may be seen as controversial but I think it's the most transparent system," Hammam said at the gala evening at the Emirates Palace hotel in Abu Dhabi.

Unable to attend

Last year, Saudi Arabia defender Hamad Al-Montashari won the award after Manchester United's Park Ji-sung, the favourite and a much more deserving candidate, was unable to attend the ceremony in Kuala Lumpur because of playing commitments. Hammam said Asian football's reputation would be damaged if the winner was not there to receive the award.

There were some other bizarre choices at this year's event. North Korea won three awards, including Association of the Year and Coach of the Year for Women's Under-20s boss Choe Kwang-sok, while China's Ma Xiaoxu was named both Women's Player of the Year and the Youth Player of the Year.

Michael Church

AUSTRALIA

Butcher rights Sydney ship

MELBOURNE VICTORY were all but assured of topping the regular season standings after barely two-thirds of the A-League campaign, leaving the scramble for the other play-off berths as the main focus of attention.

Sydney FC made a sluggish start following the departure of Dwight Yorke and a number of injuries, and it appeared that coach Terry Butcher would be sacked. However, the former England captain turned the club's fortunes around, overseeing a five-game unbeaten run that put Sydney up to second, 11 points off the pace.

Butcher has virtually the same personnel as predecessor Pierre Littbarski but is giving far more playing time to veteran David Zdrilic, and the ex-international's form has been a major factor in Sydney's rise.

The club had further good news when it was announced Australia's representatives for the 2007 Asian Champions League will be based on the results of the 2005-06 season. That means Sydney qualify as regular season champions, along with Grand Final winners Adelaide United.

Initially, it was thought qualification would be based on this season, but Champions League squads have to be named a week before the domestic season ends.

Australia drew 1-1 with Ghana in a friendly in London, John Aloisi's penalty being cancelled out by Junior Agogo after a mix-up between Mark Schwarzer and Patrick Kisnorbo.

Paul Moon

The only way is up...Butcher

Hail and farewell...coach Buchwald celebrates Reds' triumph but will now return to Germany

JAPAN

Reds finish top

URAWA REDS clinched their first J.League title by beating closest challengers and defending champions Gamba Osaka 3-2 at home on the final day. Reds went into the game leading Gamba by three points and with a superior goal difference, meaning their opponents had to win by three clear goals to retain the title.

That seemed distinctly unlikely, since Reds were unbeaten at home all season and had not lost any game by more than two goals. Nevertheless, Gamba took the game to the leaders and were rewarded when Magno Alves put them ahead after 21 minutes.

However, Robson Ponte equalised six minutes later and fellow striker Washington put the title outcome beyond doubt by scoring either side of half-time. Satoshi Yamaguchi pulled a goal back for Gamba late on. The outgoing champions' defeat allowed Kawasaki Frontale, 3-1 winners away to Gamba's city rivals Cerezo, to leapfrog them into second place.

The championship win was a personal triumph for former Reds player Guido Buchwald, who has been in charge for three years. But the German announced his resignation two days after the game saying he wanted to spend more time with his family back in his homeland.

"I feel that Reds have improved enormously in my time here," Buchwald said. "We have grown each year as a team. Our players all have different personal goals – some to get on to the bench, others into the starting line-up, others the national team – but they have all made that effort for the team, accepting my decisions and carrying on regardless. This is one of our great strengths. It's very pleasing for the manager when all the players make this effort."

Cerezo's defeat condemned them to the drop, along with Kyoto Purple Sanga. Their replacements are second level champions Yokohama FC and runners-up Kashiwa Reysol.

Yokohama were founded by supporters after Yokohama Flugels folded and merged with Yokohama Marinos to form current top-division side Yokohama F Marinos. Yokohama FC have finally completed the long haul from non-league to top-flight status with a side that includes former national team stars Kazu Miura, Shoji Jo and Motohiro Yamaguchi.

Avispa Fukuoka were set to meet Vissel Kobe in the relegation/promotion play-off.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

ROUND-UP

ASIA

● In SOUTH KOREA, former Asian champions Suwon Bluewings endured a miserable November when losing in the Final of both the championship play-offs and the FA Cup, to Songnam Ilhwa and Chunnam Dragons respectively.

Songnam secured their seventh K-League title with a 3-1 aggregate victory. They won the first leg 1-0, then Mota scored in each half of the return to clinch his side's place in the Asian Champions League. They will be joined by Chunnam, who beat Suwon 2-0 on goals from Song Jong-hyun and Kim Tae-soo.

● CHINESE champions Shandong Luneng completed the Double with a 2-0 win over Dalian Shide in the FA Cup Final. League top scorer Li Jinyu and national team-mate Han Peng were on target. The result means that Shanghai Shenhua will join Shandong in the Asian Champions League having finished runners-up in the championship.

● Romanian Anghel Iordanescu has stepped down as coach of former Asian champions Al Ain after a poor run of form in the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES League. Al Ain were only 11th out of 12 after seven rounds.

● SAUDI ARABIA'S Al Ittihad have parted company with coach Vahid Halilhodzic after he failed to steer them to a third consecutive Asian championship. They crashed out in the quarter-finals to Al Karama of Syria.

● Armed Forces clinched the SINGAPORE title with three matches to spare.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

OCEANIA

● Waitakere United have won entry to the Oceania Champions League on the strength of the fact they topped the NEW ZEALAND League after just seven games. Waitakere are emergency replacements for Vanuatu side Port Vila Sharks, who were forced to withdraw because of their ground's sub-standard facilities. New Zealand's other representatives, 2005-06 champions Auckland City, have parted company with coach Roger Wilkinson, who cited personality clashes with a number of senior players.

● Petroleum Resources Kutubu Souths won PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S inaugural National Soccer League with a 2-0 Grand Final victory over Port Moresby neighbours Gelle Hills United. Kema Jack scored both goals.

● Nadroga retained their top-flight status in FIJI when defeating second division champions Savusavu 5-1 on aggregate in the relegation/promotion play-off.

Paul Moon

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Ahly pip underdogs

Kings of Africa...Al Ahly celebrate their Champions League triumph

AFTER A NUMBER of Champions League Finals marred by violence both off and on the pitch, the 2006 decider provided a refreshing exhibition of high-intensity football and a gripping finish.

It wasn't exactly a Hollywood ending, since the contest did not have a fairytale winner. But there was certainly drama as Egyptian giants Al Ahly managed to retain the title – only the third side to achieve the feat – by scoring in the final minute of the second leg to deny Tunisian underdogs and Final debutants CS Sfaxien.

Al Ahly were in a perilous position after being held to a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Cairo. Mohamed Aboutraika had put them ahead in the 25th minute, but Sfaxien's Ghanaian striker Joetex Frimpong equalised seven minutes after the break.

And in the return, Sfaxien should have been 2-0 ahead by half-time. National team defender Issam Merdassi headed a simple chance wide, while just before the break Tarek Ziadi's goal was ruled offside. TV replays showed that it should have stood.

Al Ahly were noticeably stronger in the second half, and substitute forward Emad Moteab was twice denied by keeper Ahmed Jaouchi. Then with 10 minutes left, the visitors' Angolan striker Flavio struck the bar with a thumping drive and the follow-up from Aboutraika again produced a heart-stopping save.

As the clock ticked down the Tunisians were still on course for the title because of their away goal. However, they had not reckoned on the talent of the outstanding Aboutraika, who stole in at the death to strike a sublime volley from the edge of the penalty area past Jaouchi.

The goal stunned the hosts and brought Al Ahly a record-equalling fifth Champions Cup.

It was a thrilling finish to a fine contest in which Sfaxien, despite their low profile and lack of tradition, proved a match for their star-studded opponents.

And the quality of the game has hopefully set a new tone of maturity for African football.

Mark Gleeson

FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR

Eto'o goes for four

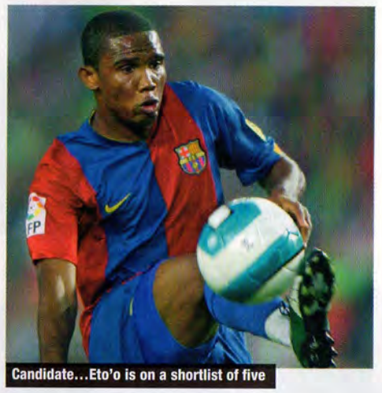
SAMUEL ETO'O could win the African Footballer of the Year award for a fourth consecutive time after being named on the five-man shortlist. The Cameroonian is included on the strength of his triumphs with Barcelona in the UEFA Champions League and Spanish League.

The other contenders are Chelsea pair Didier Drogba and Michael Essien, who also featured at the World Cup with Ivory Coast and Ghana respectively, Mohamed Aboutraika, a Nations Cup winner with Egypt and whose goal won the African Champions League for Al Ahly, and Nwankwo Kanu of Portsmouth and Nigeria.

Kanu's inclusion was a major surprise since he did nothing of note all year until a flurry of club goals in the autumn. It might have more to do with the fact the mid-January awards ceremony is being staged in the Nigerian capital Abuja and sponsored by a Nigerian mobile phone company.

Aboutraika, a strong outsider, could become the first Africa-based player to win for 16 years.

Mark Gleeson


Candidate...Eto'o is on a shortlist of five

ROUND-UP

● Samuel Kambule, who played in SOUTH AFRICA'S first post-apartheid international, against Cameroon, has died of an AIDS-related illness aged 41. Kambule won nine caps in all and scored South Africa's first goal in a competitive match, against Zimbabwe in a Nations Cup qualifier in 1992.

● Army club APR FC won the title in RWANDA but immediately fired coach Jean Marie Ntagwabira. His replacement is former DR Congo boss Andy Futila. Young Africans retained the league title in TANZANIA.

● There were three coach sackings in MOROCCO. Raja Casablanca fired Argentinian Luis Oscar Fullone after the derby defeat by Wydad, while Romanian Alexandre Moldovan and Bulgarian Ivica Todorov got their marching orders at Hassania Agadir and Maghreb Fes respectively.

● MOZAMBIQUE champions Desportivo Maputo completed the Double with a 1-0 win over Textil Pungue in the Cup Final thanks to Abilio's early goal.

● Brazilian Ricardo Rocha is the new CAPE VERDE ISLANDS coach, with predecessor Ze Rui to act as his assistant.

● Basile Aka Kouame has taken charge of Stella Abidjan in his native IVORY COAST. Kouame won the Nations Cup as a player in 1992.

● Cameroonian Eugene Njo-Lea, one of the first African exports to French football, has died in Douala. Njo-Lea won the title with Saint-Etienne and also played for Lyon. He was a founder member of the French players' union, UNFP.

Mark Gleeson

Keeping the faith...North Cyprus believe they are good enough to be a top 100 FIFA nation after winning the inaugural ELF Cup

North Cyprus in good ELF

NORTH CYPRUS want to play games against some of FIFA's weaker members, believing they can more than hold their own, after comfortably winning the inaugural ELF Cup. "We should play San Marino, Malta or Luxembourg," said captain Huseyin Amcaoglu after the tournament, which is primarily designed for non-FIFA-affiliated sides. "I feel we would be in the top 100 of FIFA members."

North Cyprus, who hosted the event, beat Crimea 3-1 in the Final having easily won all three group games – against Crimea, Tajikistan and Tibet – then thrashing Zanzibar 5-0 in the semi-finals.

Hamis Cakir, Hasan Sapsizoglu and Ertac Tackiran put the home side 3-0 ahead in the decider, with Ablyatifov Marlen scoring a late consolation for Crimea.

It was North Cyprus' third trophy in a year having lifted the Peace Cup, also on home soil, and the Wild Cup in Hamburg.

The government of Northern Cyprus backed the ELF Cup, putting up half the £135,000 staging costs, to highlight what it sees as the iniquity of the sporting embargo on the country, which is recognised as an independent state only by Turkey.

Eight teams competed in the tournament – the name of which stands for equality, liberty and fraternity – but the line-up had to be changed after withdrawals because of fears of FIFA censure. FIFA member Afghanistan pulled out after being told not to play by the world governing body, and Turkey's amateur side also opted out. Teams representing Gagauzia, an autonomous region of Moldova, and Crimea were brought in as late replacements.

Modified squads

Two other FIFA members, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, did play but modified their squads, again because of fears of repercussions from the world body. Kyrgyzstan fielded former national team keeper Hamrakulov Shakir, but the rest of the 14-man squad were all drawn from the futsal ranks; Tajikistan fielded futsal internationals and players from top club sides Vakhsh and Khima.

Zanzibar used their Under-20 side because the senior team were preparing for the CECAFA Cup, the annual event for East and Central African countries. That is the only competitive international outing for the island, which is an associate of the Confederation of African Football but remains shunned by FIFA.

Greenland brought a full-strength side that included Pelle Mortensen, a reserve forward with Danish top division OB Odense, and new captain Niklas Kreutzmann, a semi-professional with Danish second level side Aarhus Fremad.

Kyrgyzstan topped Group A ahead of Zanzibar after wins over Gagauzia and Greenland but fell in the semi-finals, beaten 3-2 after extra-time by Crimea, the Group B runners-up to North Cyprus. Kyrgyzstan then beat Zanzibar 9-8 on penalties in the third-place play-off after a 2-2 draw.

A tired Tibet, without star man Dorjee Tsawa, who plays in the Swiss top flight, suffered the heaviest defeat, 10-0 against North Cyprus.

The tournament suffered from poor attendances. Up to 7,000 were expected for the Final at the 28,000-capacity Ataturk stadium in the capital, Lefkosa (Nicosia), but only a few hundred turned up. "The crowds were not very good but the national team have been playing for only a year or so," said organiser Cengiz Uzun of the North Cyprus football federation. "We have to carry on playing."

If the Greek Cypriot government accept a United Nations plan to reunite the island, North Cyprus want to continue playing as a separate entity and then possibly join UEFA and FIFA.

Steve Menary

TALENT SCOUT

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Riccardo MONTOLIVO

Italy Under-21 heartbeat hailed as the new Totti

ATALANTA CANNOT STOP churning out talent, it seems. Over the past two decades, the club from Bergamo in Lombardy have been the launchpad for countless professional careers, including those of former Italy midfielder Roberto Donadoni (now, of course, the national team coach) and Alessio Tacchinardi (ex-Juventus and Italy). Now, many Italian pundits are convinced that young playmaker Riccardo Montolivo, who quit Atalanta for Fiorentina in the summer of 2005, is on course for similar high office.

The slightly-built 21-year-old must be getting used to gushing praise. Two years ago, the great Gianfranco Zola predicted a glittering future for Montolivo, while Fiorentina boss Cesare Prandelli believes he is cut from the same cloth as current Milan and Italy midfield strategist Andrea Pirlo. Others have called him the "new Totti" or likened him to Giancarlo Antognoni, the outstanding Fiorentina and *Azzurri* No 10 of the 1970s and early 80s.

Montolivo definitely has all the assets to live up to the hyperbole – vision, balance, exquisite passing ability with either foot, imagination well beyond the norm and, unlike so many *fantasisti*, is not afraid to put on the artisan's overalls and graft. He is adaptable, too, able to play as a central playmaker, out wide or behind the strikers.

Although Montolivo's goalscoring record is not great – an average of two per season since making his debut for Atalanta in Serie B in 2003 – he is by no means lacking in shooting power; he simply needs to be more confident and try his luck from long distance more often.

The heartbeat of Italy's Under-21s, Montolivo provided evidence of the marksman within him in his side's 2-1 aggregate victory over Spain in the qualifying play-offs for next year's European Championship. His goal in the second, away leg win was one to cherish, a sensational right-footed volley that had shades of Marco Van Basten's spectacular effort for Holland in the Final of Euro 88.

Juventus, Milan and Real Madrid all know an exciting prospect when they see one.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Fiorentina
Country Italy
Born June 18, 1985, in Caravaggio
Previous club Atalanta

Ben SAHAR

Israeli teenager eyeing a place in the Chelsea first team

ALTHOUGH TEENAGE ISRAELI forward Ben Sahar has yet to appear in a first-team game as a professional, he is being widely touted as his country's most exciting prospect for years.

Chelsea certainly liked what they saw after spotting the youngster, a product of the Hapoel Tel Aviv academy, in action for Israel's Under-16s against the Republic of Ireland two years ago. After monitoring Sahar's free-scoring displays for club and country, the English champions finally signed him in May this year, no doubt encouraged by the fact that he did not have to apply for a UK work permit – the 17-year-old is entitled to an EU passport courtesy of his mother's Polish roots.

Of course, it is not a foregone conclusion that Sahar will prosper at a club who tend to buy off-the-shelf superstars. But if confidence counts for anything, he has a fighting chance. "While I know there will be tough moments ahead, I have a strong character and feel I can be a success at Chelsea," Sahar says. "I'm sure this transfer will help take my career forward. I've achieved the sort of move I've dreamed about for a long time, and don't intend to give up."

The youngster has already impressed for Chelsea's reserves and was instrumental in Israel's qualification for next year's European Under-21 Championship, the first time they have reached the finals. Sahar made his debut in the play-off first leg away to France, a 1-1 draw, but few would have guessed it. He was a threat all night and scored a fine goal.

"He is exceptionally talented," enthuses Eyal Hayit, his coach at Hapoel from the age of nine. "He is very fast, can look after himself physically, has unbelievable ball skills and is a natural finisher. What makes me even more sure he will make the grade in Europe is his attitude. He is determined to achieve the goals he sets himself."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Chelsea (Eng)
Country Israel
Born March 21, 1989, in Tel Aviv
Previous club Hapoel Tel Aviv

Tom DE MUL

Belgian winger enjoying his second coming at Ajax

FRESH-FACED BELGIAN Tom De Mul had an early flowering at Ajax, making his first-team debut when still only 17 in February 2004. But by the end of that year the right-winger, who had joined in 2001 from Ajax's former satellite club Germinal Beerschot, found himself back in the reserves, having been deemed too lightweight and inconsistent.

For a while De Mul's career seemed beyond repair, but the Ajax management did not lose faith in him and at the start of last season decided a loan spell at Vitesse Arnhem might help his development.

Quite so. The regular top-flight football he enjoyed at Vitesse was just what De Mul needed. His confidence soared, and without losing his natural incisiveness and flair, his game took on a more disciplined sheen and he toughened up physically, becoming much harder to force off the ball.

Ajax recalled him last summer, technical director Martin Van Geel explaining: "Tom made great strides at Vitesse. He has become mentally stronger. He has matured. We think he can be a valuable member of the pro squad, someone who can seriously compete for a starting place."

Prophetic words. De Mul would soon make the right-flank berth his own – supplanting erratic Argentinian Mauro Rosales – thanks to a string of electrifying performances, notably in Ajax's 4-0 demolition of Feyenoord in Rotterdam in October.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Ajax (Hol)
Country Belgium
Born March 4, 1986, in Kapellen
Previous clubs Kapellen, Germinal Beerschot, Vitesse Arnhem (Hol; loan)
Honours Dutch League 2004

Radamel Falcao GARCIA

Forward who promises Colombia goals

COLOMBIA HAVE NARROWLY missed out on the last two World Cup finals. Two of the main reasons have been a lack of natural goalscorers and the fact that players who have enjoyed success at Under-20 level have failed to carry that form into the senior side. Radamel Falcao Garcia is the brightest hope of offering an improvement in both departments.

Colombia's Under-20s finished third at the 2003 World Youth Cup and were South American champions two years later. But many of those youngsters were seduced into an early move abroad, found themselves left on the bench, and as a consequence their careers lost momentum.

Garcia was rarely a starter in the 2005 Under-20 side but has since picked up momentum and seems set to make an impact at full international level in 2007.

As for the goals, well, his father, a defender with Union Magdalena, named him "Falcao" after the great Brazilian midfielder, but Radamel has become a striker whose eyes are firmly fixed on the prize.

"I try to be involved in the build-up, but if you play up front you have to score," the 20-year-old says. "A goal changes everything, it's so important for a striker. We live for goals, for the roar of the crowd and the emotion of the terraces."

Juan Pablo Angel, Colombia's leading attacker in recent times, only really developed his finishing after moving to Argentina to join River Plate. Garcia has a headstart since he has been with the Buenos Aires club since the age of 15.

"I know every corridor of the Monumental stadium," he says. "I'm a son of the club. River gave me everything" – including the chance to work with some of the world's most successful youth development specialists.

Developing technically and filling out physically, Garcia was thrown into the first team towards the end of 2005. The decision caused surprise, but the coach at the time, Reinaldo Merlo, had no doubts. "Garcia can really play," he said. "He can drop deep and link up, work both flanks, he's good in the air and keeps his cool in front of goal."

The young Colombian was an overnight sensation, catching the eye with his talent for cutting inside and heading direct for goal. But he then suffered a knee ligament injury that kept him out for 10 months.

An accomplished volleyed goal against Rosario Central in late October confirmed his return, though he has been largely restricted to substitute appearances. However, his ability and the impending sale of first-choice striker Gonzalo Higuain surely mean he will retake a starting berth next year. "And if I'm playing well for River, I'll be given a chance in the Colombia side as we build towards the next World Cup," he says.

Garcia combines football with studying journalism and could easily write an opinion piece about the challenges faced by his national team. "The Colombian player has always been technically gifted but has consistently found it hard to adapt to European football," he says. "But we need to learn from that style. We need to be more direct, playing the ball quicker through midfield. Since the generation of Valderrama, we've stagnated."

Like Valderrama, Garcia was born in the northern city of Santa Marta. And as Colombia struggle to recapture the momentum of the Valderrama years, he looks ready to lead from the front.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club River Plate (Arg)
Country Colombia
Born December 10, 1986, in Santa Marta
Honours South American Under-20 Championship 2005

Yaya TOURE

Vieira-style Ivorian who's a forceful presence on and off the pitch

ARSENAL'S OUTSTANDING IVORIAN centre-back Kolo Toure was not merely being modest when insisting, in 2003, that younger brother Yaya was a better player than him. Anyone who saw Yaya in action at this year's World Cup would know why he is so often mentioned in the same breath as Patrick Vieira. Like the France captain, the 23-year-old is a wonderful blend of power and adventurousness, a rock in front of the back four, an excellent passer, long or short, and capable of breaking deep behind enemy lines with his runaway surges.

Toure, who joined Monaco from Olympiakos last summer, also offers a goal threat. His strike in a 2-1 victory over Le Mans in September was a piledriver after a dazzling dribble.

Yaya is far more impulsive and fiery than Kolo, much more inclined to make waves. He refused to turn up for pre-season training to force his way out of Olympiakos, whom he had joined from Ukraine club Metalurh Donetsk in 2003. Then, once installed at Monaco, he was soon on a collision course with coach Laszlo Boloni. Toure, a graduate of the famous Guillou academy in Abidjan, had no misgivings about going public with complaints that he was being played out of position, and could not hide his glee following Boloni's sacking in late October.

"Seeing him leave was a relief and a great satisfaction," Toure said. "He didn't stop criticising me. I felt he didn't want me here and only picked me at the request of the directors. I couldn't go on with him."

Strong in his performances, even more so in his opinions.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Monaco (Fra)
Country Ivory Coast
Born May 13, 1983, in Sokoura Bouake
Previous clubs ASEC Abidjan, Beveren (Blg), Metalurh Donetsk (Ukr), Olympiakos (Gre)
International debut June 2004, v Egypt
International caps 18 (3 goals)
Honours Greek League 2006; Greek Cup 2006

ARDA Turan

Turkish box of tricks mesmerising defenders

TURKEY HAVE BEEN in desperate need of a pick-me-up following their failure to reach Euro 2004 and this year's World Cup – and it has arrived in the shape of Galatasaray wide man Arda Turan.

The 19-year-old, at his best on the right flank but also comfortable on the left, offers a whole range of tricks as well as speed and perfect balance. Defenders seem mesmerised as Arda runs at them, shuffling the ball from one foot to the other. He boasts a speciality drag-back that even the great Puskas would be proud of and is quite exceptional playing with his back to goal, spinning away from markers in the blink of an eye.

A product of the Galatasaray youth system, Arda came of age during a six-month loan spell at Manisaspor last season. He returned to his mother club in July and established himself in the first team thanks to a wonderful performance – two goals, two assists – in a 5-2 Champions League qualifying victory over Czech side Mlada Boleslav. A week later, he won his first cap in a friendly against Luxembourg and has clearly taken to international football – the youngster was widely considered to be man of the match in the 1-1 draw with Italy in a November friendly in Bergamo.

One school of thought in Turkey is that Arda might, in time, develop into a brilliant No 10. However, a more pressing issue is his temperament – he was sent off for a Zidane-style butt on Franck Jurietti of Bordeaux in a recent Champions League game.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Galatasaray
Country Turkey
Born January 30, 1987, in Istanbul
Previous club Manisaspor (loan)
International debut August 2006, v Luxembourg
International caps 5 (0 goals)

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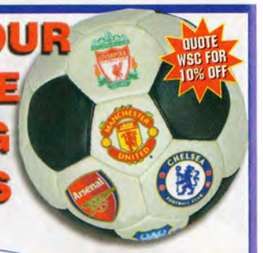

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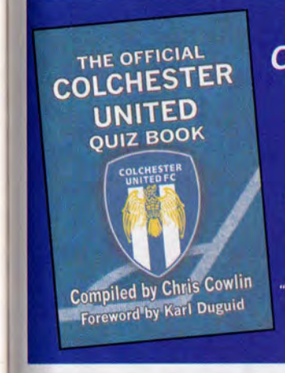

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INTERNATIONALS

EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Nov 15 - Brussels
Belgium 0
Poland 1 (Matusiak 19)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 37,578. **Ref:** Dougal (Sco)
Belgium: Stijnen - Hoefkens, Van Buyten, Leonard (Mudingayi 80), Vermaelen, Vanden Borre (Huysegems 46), Simons, Geraerts, Goor, E Mpenza, Vandenbergh (Pieroni 62).
Poland: Boruc - Wasilewski, Michal Zewlakow, J Bak, Bronowicki, Blaszczykowski, Dudka (Murawski 80), Sobolewski, Smolarek, Matusiak (Kazmierczak 89), Zurawski (Gargula 62).

Nov 15 - Helsinki
Finland 1 (Nurmela 8)
Armenia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,445. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Finland: Jaaskelainen - Kallio, Hyypia, Tihinen, Nyman, Kolkka, Heikkinen, Vayrynen (Ilola 46), Nurmela, Eremenko (Kuqi 88), Johansson.
Armenia: Kasparov - Pachajyan, Hovsepyan, Tadevosyan, K Dokhoyan (V Aleksanyan 46), Artavazd Karamyan, Agvan Mkrtchyan, R Hachatryan, Mkhitaryan (Ara Hakopyan 74), Zebelyan (Arman Karamyan 79), Shakhgeldyan.

Nov 15 - Coimbra
Portugal 3 (Simao 9, 83, Cristiano Ronaldo 29)
Kazakhstan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Rogalla (Swi)
Portugal: Ricardo - Miguel, Ricardo Carvalho, Tonel (Jorge Andrade 75), Paulo Ferreira, Raul Meireles, Tiago, Deco (Carlos Martins 62), Cristiano Ronaldo (Quaresma 56), Nuno Gomes, Simao.
Kazakhstan: Loria - Azovsky, Kuchma, Zhalmagambetov, Smakov, Travin, Khokhlov, Sergienko (Larin 72), Baltiev, Zhumaskaliyev, Byakov.

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Finland	5	3	2	0	7	2	11
Serbia	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Poland	5	3	1	1	6	5	10
Portugal	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Belgium	5	2	1	2	4	2	7
Kazakhstan	5	0	2	3	1	7	2
Armenia	4	0	1	3	0	5	1
Azerbaijan	4	0	1	3	1	8	1

16.08.06 Belgium-Kazakhstan 0-0
02.09.06 Poland-Finland 1-3
02.09.06 Serbia-Azerbaijan 1-0
06.09.06 Armenia-Belgium 0-1
06.09.06 Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan 1-1
06.09.06 Finland-Portugal 1-1
06.09.06 Poland-Serbia 1-1
07.10.06 Armenia-Finland 0-0
07.10.06 Kazakhstan-Poland 0-1
07.10.06 Portugal-Azerbaijan 3-0
07.10.06 Serbia-Belgium 1-0
11.10.06 Belgium-Azerbaijan 3-0
11.10.06 Kazakhstan-Finland 0-2
11.10.06 Poland-Portugal 2-1
11.10.06 Serbia-Armenia 3-0
15.11.06 Belgium-Poland 0-1
15.11.06 Finland-Armenia 1-0
15.11.06 Portugal-Kazakhstan 3-0
24.03.07 Kazakhstan-Serbia
24.03.07 Poland-Azerbaijan
24.03.07 Portugal-Belgium
28.03.07 Azerbaijan-Finland
28.03.07 Poland-Armenia
28.03.07 Serbia-Portugal
02.06.07 Azerbaijan-Poland
02.06.07 Belgium-Portugal
02.06.07 Finland-Serbia
02.06.07 Kazakhstan-Armenia
06.06.07 Armenia-Poland
06.06.07 Finland-Belgium
06.06.07 Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan
22.08.07 Armenia-Portugal
22.08.07 Belgium-Serbia
22.08.07 Finland-Kazakhstan
08.09.07 Azerbaijan-Armenia
08.09.07 Portugal-Poland
08.09.07 Serbia-Finland
12.09.07 Armenia-Azerbaijan
12.09.07 Finland-Poland
12.09.07 Kazakhstan-Belgium
12.09.07 Portugal-Serbia
13.10.07 Armenia-Serbia
13.10.07 Azerbaijan-Portugal
13.10.07 Belgium-Finland
13.10.07 Poland-Kazakhstan
17.10.07 Azerbaijan-Serbia
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17.10.07 Kazakhstan-Portugal
17.11.07 Finland-Azerbaijan
17.11.07 Poland-Belgium
17.11.07 Portugal-Armenia
17.11.07 Serbia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Armenia-Kazakhstan
21.11.07 Azerbaijan-Belgium
21.11.07 Portugal-Finland
21.11.07 Serbia-Poland

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scotland	4	3	0	1	9	3	9
France	4	3	0	1	11	2	9
Italy	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Ukraine	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Lithuania	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Georgia	4	1	0	3	9	9	3
Faroe Islands	4	0	0	4	0	18	0

16.08.06 Faroe Islands-Georgia 0-6
02.09.06 Georgia-France 0-3
02.09.06 Italy-Lithuania 1-1
02.09.06 Scotland-Faroe Islands 6-0
06.09.06 France-Italy 3-1
06.09.06 Lithuania-Scotland 1-2
06.09.06 Ukraine-Georgia 3-2
07.10.06 Faroe Islands-Lithuania 0-1
07.10.06 Italy-Ukraine 2-0
07.10.06 Scotland-France 1-0
11.10.06 France-Faroe Islands 5-0
11.10.06 Georgia-Italy 1-3
11.10.06 Ukraine-Scotland 2-0
24.03.07 Faroe Islands-Ukraine
24.03.07 Lithuania-France
24.03.07 Scotland-Georgia
28.03.07 Georgia-Faroe Islands
28.03.07 Italy-Scotland
28.03.07 Ukraine-Lithuania
02.06.07 France-Ukraine
02.06.07 Lithuania-Georgia
02.06.07 Faroe Islands-Italy
06.06.07 Faroe Islands-Scotland
06.06.07 France-Georgia
06.06.07 Lithuania-Italy
08.09.07 Georgia-Ukraine
08.09.07 Italy-France
08.09.07 Scotland-Lithuania
12.09.07 France-Scotland
12.09.07 Lithuania-Faroe Islands
12.09.07 Ukraine-Italy
13.10.07 Faroe Islands-France
13.10.07 Italy-Georgia
13.10.07 Scotland-Ukraine
17.10.07 France-Lithuania
17.10.07 Georgia-Scotland
17.10.07 Ukraine-Faroe Islands
17.11.07 Lithuania-Ukraine
17.11.07 Scotland-Italy
21.11.07 Georgia-Lithuania
21.11.07 Italy-Faroe Islands
21.11.07 Ukraine-France

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkey	3	3	0	0	8	0	9
Greece	3	3	0	0	6	0	9
Norway	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Bosnia-Herz	4	1	1	2	8	11	4
Malta	3	1	0	2	4	8	3
Hungary	4	1	0	3	5	8	3
Moldova	4	0	1	3	2	10	1

02.09.06 Hungary-Norway 1-4
02.09.06 Malta-Bosnia-Herz 2-5
02.09.06 Moldova-Greece 0-1
06.09.06 Bosnia-Herz-Hungary 1-3
06.09.06 Norway-Moldova 2-0
06.09.06 Turkey-Malta 2-0
07.10.06 Greece-Norway 1-0
07.10.06 Hungary-Turkey 0-1
07.10.06 Moldova-Bosnia-Herz 2-2
11.10.06 Bosnia-Herz-Greece 0-4
11.10.06 Malta-Hungary 2-1
11.10.06 Turkey-Moldova 5-0
24.03.07 Greece-Turkey
24.03.07 Moldova-Malta
24.03.07 Norway-Bosnia-Herz
28.03.07 Hungary-Moldova
28.03.07 Malta-Greece
28.03.07 Turkey-Norway
02.06.07 Bosnia-Herz-Turkey
02.06.07 Greece-Hungary
02.06.07 Norway-Malta
06.06.07 Greece-Moldova
06.06.07 Bosnia-Herz-Malta
06.06.07 Norway-Hungary
08.09.07 Hungary-Bosnia-Herz
08.09.07 Malta-Turkey
08.09.07 Moldova-Norway
12.09.07 Bosnia-Herz-Moldova
12.09.07 Norway-Greece
12.09.07 Turkey-Hungary
13.10.07 Greece-Bosnia-Herz
13.10.07 Hungary-Malta
13.10.07 Moldova-Turkey
17.10.07 Bosnia-Herz-Norway
17.10.07 Malta-Moldova
17.10.07 Turkey-Greece
17.11.07 Greece-Malta
17.11.07 Moldova-Hungary
17.11.07 Norway-Turkey
21.11.07 Hungary-Greece
21.11.07 Malta-Norway
21.11.07 Turkey-Bosnia-Herz

Group D

Nov 15 - Nicosia
Cyprus 1 (Okkas 43)
Germany 1 (Ballack 15)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Cyprus: Georgallides - Lambrou, Louka, Theodotou (Charalambous 80), Michael (Krassas 68), Charalambidis, Elia, Makrides, Okkas (C Nicolaou 72), Constantinou, Aloneftis.
Germany: Hildebrand - Fritz, A Friedrich, M Friedrich, Lahm, Odonkor (Hitzlsperger 80), Frings, Ballack, Schweinsteiger, Klose, Neuville (Hanke 62).

Nov 15 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 5 (D Simoncini og 7, Doyle 23, Keane 31, pen 57, 85)
San Marino 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 34,018. **Ref:** Isaksen (Far)
Rep Ireland: Given - O'Shea, McShane, Dunne, Finnan, A Reid, Carsley (Douglas 50), Kilbane (Lee 79), Duff, Keane, Doyle (McGeady 63).
San Marino: F Valentini - C Valentini, Vannucci (Crescentini 72), Albani, D Simoncini (Bonini 80), S Bacciocchi, Andreini, Bugli, Manuel Marani, A Selva, Mariotti (Michele Marani 59).

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	4	3	1	0	19	2	10
Czech Rep	4	3	1	0	13	2	10
Slovakia	4	2	0	2	12	9	6
Cyprus	4	1	1	2	8	12	4
Rep Ireland	4	1	1	2	8	7	4
Wales	3	1	0	2	5	8	3
San Marino	3	0	0	3	0	25	0

02.09.06 Czech Republic-Wales 2-1
02.09.06 Germany-Rep Ireland 1-0
02.09.06 Slovakia-Cyprus 6-1
06.09.06 San Marino-Germany 0-13
06.09.06 Slovakia-Czech Republic 0-3
07.10.06 Cyprus-Rep Ireland 5-2
07.10.06 Czech Republic-San Marino 7-0
07.10.06 Wales-Slovakia 1-5
11.10.06 Rep Ireland-Czech Republic 1-1
11.10.06 Slovakia-Germany 1-4
11.10.06 Wales-Cyprus 3-1
15.11.06 Cyprus-Germany 1-1
15.11.06 Rep Ireland-San Marino 5-0
07.02.07 San Marino-Rep Ireland
24.03.07 Cyprus-Slovakia
24.03.07 Czech Republic-Germany
24.03.07 Rep Ireland-Wales
28.03.07 Czech Republic-Cyprus
28.03.07 Rep Ireland-Slovakia
28.03.07 Wales-San Marino
02.06.07 Germany-San Marino
02.06.07 Wales-Czech Republic
06.06.07 Germany-Slovakia
22.08.07 San Marino-Cyprus
08.09.07 San Marino-Czech Republic
08.09.07 Slovakia-Rep Ireland
08.09.07 Wales-Germany
12.09.07 Cyprus-San Marino
12.09.07 Czech Republic-Rep Ireland
12.09.07 Slovakia-Wales
13.10.07 Cyprus-Wales
13.10.07 Rep Ireland-Germany
13.10.07 Slovakia-San Marino
17.10.07 Germany-Czech Republic
17.10.07 Rep Ireland-Cyprus
17.10.07 San Marino-Wales
17.11.07 Czech Republic-Slovakia
17.11.07 Germany-Cyprus
17.11.07 Wales-Rep Ireland
21.11.07 Cyprus-Czech Republic
21.11.07 Germany-Wales
21.11.07 San Marino-Slovakia

Group E

Nov 15 - Tel Aviv
Israel 3 (Colautti 8, 89, Benayoun 68)
Croatia 4 (Srna pen 35, Eduardo 39, 54, 73)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Iturralde Gonzalez (Spa)
Israel: Awat - Afek, Ben Haim, Ben Yosef, Keisi, Alberman, Badir (Tamuz 46), Tal, Zandberg (Ben Shushan 59), Benayoun, Colautti.
Croatia: Runje - Corluka, Simic, R Kovac, Simunic, Srna (Olic 88), N Kovac, Modric, Kranjcar (Babic 69), Eduardo (J Leko 80), Petric.

Nov 15 - Skopje
Macedonia 0
Russia 2 (V Bystrov 18, Arshavin 32)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Allaerts (Blg)
Macedonia: Nikolovski - Lazarevski, Sedloski, I Mitreski, Noveski, Petrov, A Mitreski (Jancevski 46; Grozdanovski 71), Sumulikoski, Maznov, Sakiri (Tasevski 35), Stojkov.
Russia: Akinfeev - V Berezutsky, A Berezutsky, Kolodin, V Bystrov, Titov, Bilyaletdinov, Semshov, Zhirkov, Arshavin (Pavlyuchenko 90), Pogrebnyak (Sychev 57).

GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	4	3	1	0	13	3	10
Russia	4	2	2	0	5	1	8
England	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
Macedonia	5	2	1	2	4	3	7
Israel	4	2	1	1	9	6	7
Estonia	3	0	0	3	0	4	0
Andorra	4	0	0	4	1	19	0

16.08.06 Estonia-Macedonia 0-1
02.09.06 England-Andorra 5-0
02.09.06 Estonia-Israel 0-1
06.09.06 Israel-Andorra 4-1
06.09.06 Macedonia-England 0-1
06.09.06 Russia-Croatia 0-0
07.10.06 Croatia-Andorra 7-0
07.10.06 England-Macedonia 0-0
07.10.06 Russia-Israel 1-1
11.10.06 Andorra-Macedonia 0-3
11.10.06 Croatia-England 2-0
11.10.06 Russia-Estonia 2-0
15.11.06 Israel-Croatia 3-4
15.11.06 Macedonia-Russia 0-2
24.03.07 Croatia-Macedonia
24.03.07 Estonia-Russia
24.03.07 Israel-England
28.03.07 Andorra-England
28.03.07 Israel-Estonia
02.06.07 Estonia-Croatia
02.06.07 Macedonia-Israel
02.06.07 Russia-Andorra
06.06.07 Andorra-Israel
06.06.07 Croatia-Russia
06.06.07 Estonia-England
22.08.07 Estonia-Andorra
08.09.07 Croatia-Estonia
08.09.07 England-Israel
08.09.07 Russia-Macedonia
12.09.07 Andorra-Croatia
12.09.07 England-Russia
12.09.07 Macedonia-Estonia
13.10.07 England-Estonia
17.10.07 Croatia-Israel
17.10.07 Macedonia-Andorra
17.10.07 Russia-England
17.11.07 Andorra-Estonia
17.11.07 Israel-Russia
17.11.07 Macedonia-Croatia
21.11.07 Andorra-Russia
21.11.07 England-Croatia
21.11.07 Israel-Macedonia

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	4	4	0	0	8	2	12
Denmark	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
N Ireland	4	2	1	1	4	5	7
Latvia	3	1	0	2	4	2	3
Spain	3	1	0	2	6	5	3
Iceland	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
Liechtenstein	3	0	0	3	1	11	0

02.09.06 Latvia-Sweden 0-1
02.09.06 Northern Ireland-Iceland 0-3
02.09.06 Spain-Liechtenstein 4-0
06.09.06 Iceland-Denmark 0-2
06.09.06 Northern Ireland-Spain 3-2
06.09.06 Sweden-Liechtenstein 3-1
07.10.06 Denmark-Northern Ireland 0-0
07.10.06 Latvia-Iceland 4-0
07.10.06 Sweden-Spain 2-0
11.10.06 Iceland-Sweden 1-2
11.10.06 Liechtenstein-Denmark 0-4
11.10.06 Northern Ireland-Latvia 1-0
24.03.07 Liechtenstein-N Ireland
24.03.07 Spain-Denmark
28.03.07 Liechtenstein-Latvia
28.03.07 Northern Ireland-Sweden
28.03.07 Spain-Iceland
02.06.07 Denmark-Sweden
02.06.07 Iceland-Liechtenstein
02.06.07 Latvia-Spain
06.06.07 Latvia-Denmark
06.06.07 Liechtenstein-Spain
06.06.07 Sweden-Iceland
22.08.07 N Ireland-Liechtenstein
08.09.07 Iceland-Spain
08.09.07 Latvia-Northern Ireland
08.09.07 Sweden-Denmark
12.09.07 Denmark-Liechtenstein
12.09.07 Iceland-Northern Ireland
12.09.07 Spain-Latvia
13.10.07 Denmark-Spain
13.10.07 Iceland-Latvia
13.10.07 Liechtenstein-Sweden
17.10.07 Denmark-Latvia
17.10.07 Liechtenstein-Iceland
17.10.07 Sweden-Northern Ireland
17.11.07 Latvia-Liechtenstein
17.11.07 Northern Ireland-Denmark
17.11.07 Spain-Sweden
21.11.07 Denmark-Iceland
21.11.07 Spain-Northern Ireland
21.11.07 Sweden-Latvia

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	4	3	1	0	7	2	10
Bulgaria	4	2	2	0	7	3	8
Romania	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Belarus	4	1	1	2	7	10	4
Slovenia	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
Albania	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
Luxembourg	3	0	0	3	0	4	0

02.09.06 Belarus-Albania 2-2
02.09.06 Luxembourg-Holland 0-1
02.09.06 Romania-Bulgaria 2-2
06.09.06 Albania-Romania 0-2
06.09.06 Bulgaria-Slovenia 3-0
06.09.06 Holland-Belarus 3-0
07.10.06 Bulgaria-Holland 1-1
07.10.06 Romania-Belarus 3-1
07.10.06 Slovenia-Luxembourg 2-0
11.10.06 Belarus-Slovenia 4-2
11.10.06 Holland-Albania 2-1
11.10.06 Luxembourg-Bulgaria 0-1
24.03.07 Albania-Slovenia
24.03.07 Holland-Romania
24.03.07 Luxembourg-Belarus
28.03.07 Bulgaria-Albania
28.03.07 Romania-Luxembourg
28.03.07 Slovenia-Holland
02.06.07 Albania-Luxembourg
02.06.07 Belarus-Bulgaria
02.06.07 Slovenia-Romania
06.06.07 Bulgaria-Belarus
06.06.07 Luxembourg-Albania
06.06.07 Romania-Slovenia
08.09.07 Belarus-Romania
08.09.07 Holland-Bulgaria
08.09.07 Luxembourg-Slovenia
12.09.07 Albania-Holland
12.09.07 Bulgaria-Luxembourg
12.09.07 Slovenia-Belarus
13.10.07 Belarus-Luxembourg
13.10.07 Romania-Holland
13.10.07 Slovenia-Albania
17.10.07 Albania-Bulgaria
17.10.07 Holland-Slovenia
17.10.07 Luxembourg-Romania
17.11.07 Albania-Belarus
17.11.07 Bulgaria-Romania
17.11.07 Holland-Luxembourg
21.11.07 Belarus-Holland
21.11.07 Romania-Albania
21.11.07 Slovenia-Bulgaria

Top two from each group qualify for finals. Austria and Switzerland qualify automatically as co-hosts

Finals tournament: June 7-29, 2008

2007 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Group A

Nov 15 - Sapporo
Japan 3 (Tulio Tanaka 20, Ganaha 29, 49)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Qahtani pen 33)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 40,965. **Ref:** Shield (Aus)
Japan: Kawaguchi - Abe, Tulio Tanaka, Konno, Kaji, Komano, K Suzuki, K Nakamura, Alex (Yamagishi 65), Maki (Hanyu 87), Ganaha (Takamatsu 74).
Saudi Arabia: Al-Mosailem - A Al-Dosari (Fallatah 77), Tukar, Al-Montashari, Sulaimani, Haidar (Al-Shlhoub 63), Al-Thaker, Al-Mahyani (Al-Suwailh 56), Al-Ghamdi, Al-Saqri, Al-Qahtani. *Sent off: Al-Montashari 90min.*

Nov 15 - Sana'a
Yemen 2 (Al-Haggam 60, Al-Nono 82)
India 1 (Pradeep 52)
HT: 0-0

GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	6	5	0	1	15	2	15
Saudi Arabia	6	5	0	1	21	4	15
Yemen	6	2	0	4	5	13	6
India	6	0	0	6	2	24	0

22.02.06 Japan-India 6-0
22.02.06 Yemen-Saudi Arabia 0-4
01.03.06 India-Yemen 0-3
16.08.06 India-Saudi Arabia 0-3
16.08.06 Japan-Yemen 2-0
03.09.06 Saudi Arabia-Japan 1-0
06.09.06 Saudi Arabia-India 7-1
06.09.06 Yemen-Japan 0-1
11.10.06 India-Japan 0-3
11.10.06 Saudi Arabia-Yemen 5-0
15.11.06 Japan-Saudi Arabia 3-1
15.11.06 Yemen-India 2-1

Group B

Nov 15 - Tehran
Iran 2 (Enayati 48, Badamaki 90)
South Korea 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000
Iran: Roudbarian - Sadeghi, Fekri, Nosrati, Vahedi-Nikbakht, Nekounam, Timotian, Kazemian (Badamaki 77), Enayati (Khatibi 70), Karimi, Hashemian (Shakouri 88).
South Korea: Kim Young-kwang - Kim Jin-kyu, Kim Dong-jin, Kim Chi-woo (Yang Sang-min 42), Cho Won-hee (Cho Sung-hwan 86), Choi Sung-kuk (Yeom Ki-hun 77), Kim Jung-woo, Lee Ho, Lee Chun-soo, Jung Jo-gook, Kim Dong-hun.

Nov 15 - Damascus
Syria 3 (Al-Jabban 51, Al-Khatib 62, 79)
Taiwan 0
HT: 0-0

GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	6	4	2	0	12	2	14
South Korea	6	3	2	1	15	5	11
Syria	6	2	2	2	10	6	8
Taiwan	6	0	0	6	0	24	0

22.02.06 Iran-Taiwan 4-0
22.02.06 Syria-South Korea 1-2
01.03.06 Taiwan-Syria 0-4
16.08.06 Iran-Syria 1-1
16.08.06 Taiwan-South Korea 0-3
02.09.06 South Korea-Iran 1-1
06.09.06 South Korea-Taiwan 8-0
06.09.06 Syria-Iran 0-2
11.10.06 South Korea-Syria 1-1
11.10.06 Taiwan-Iran 0-2
15.11.06 Iran-South Korea 2-0
15.11.06 Syria-Taiwan 3-0

Group C

Nov 15 - Amman
Jordan 3 (Deeb 80, Ali 84, Al-Shaikh 90)
Oman 0
HT: 0-0

Nov 15 - Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates 3 (Abbas 54, Omar 58, 73)
Pakistan 2 (Akram 23, Ahmed 67)
HT: 0-1

GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UAE	6	4	1	1	11	6	13
Oman	6	4	0	2	14	6	12
Jordan	6	3	1	2	10	5	10
Pakistan	6	0	0	6	4	22	0

22.02.06 Jordan-Pakistan 3-0
22.02.06 UAE-Oman 1-0
01.03.06 Oman-Jordan 3-0
01.03.06 Pakistan-UAE 1-4
16.08.06 Jordan-UAE 1-2
16.08.06 Pakistan-Oman 1-4
06.09.06 Oman-Pakistan 5-0
06.09.06 UAE-Jordan 0-0
11.10.06 Oman-UAE 2-1
11.10.06 Pakistan-Jordan 0-3
15.11.06 Jordan-Oman 3-0
15.11.06 UAE-Pakistan 3-2

Group D

Nov 15 - Manama
Bahrain 2 (Yousef pen 35, Issa 43)
Kuwait 1 (Laheeb 70)
HT: 2-0

GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Australia	4	3	0	1	7	3	9
Bahrain	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
Kuwait	4	1	1	2	3	4	4

Lebanon withdrew

22.02.06 Bahrain-Australia 1-3
01.03.06 Kuwait-Bahrain 0-0
16.08.06 Australia-Kuwait 2-0
06.09.06 Kuwait-Australia 2-0
11.10.06 Australia-Bahrain 5-0
15.11.06 Bahrain-Kuwait 2-1

Group E

Nov 15 - Changsha
China 1 (Han Peng 40)
Iraq 1 (Ahmad 65)
HT: 1-0

GROUP E – FINAL*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iraq	6	3	2	1	12	8	11
China	6	3	2	1	7	3	11
Singapore	5	1	1	3	4	6	4
Palestine	5	1	1	3	3	9	4

**Pending decision on Singapore v Palestine game, which was cancelled because of the Palestinians' travel difficulties*

22.02.06 China-Palestine 2-0
22.02.06 Singapore-Iraq 2-0
01.03.06 Iraq-China 2-1
01.03.06 Palestine-Singapore 1-0
16.08.06 China-Singapore 1-0
17.08.06 Palestine-Iraq 0-3
06.09.06 Iraq-Palestine 2-2
06.09.06 Singapore-China 0-0
11.10.06 Iraq-Singapore 4-2
11.10.06 Palestine-China 0-2
15.11.06 China-Iraq 1-1
15.11.06 Singapore-Palestine ..... canc.

Group F

Nov 15 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 2 (Ambassa 43, pen 74)
Bangladesh 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Hoque (Bangladesh) 73min

Nov 15 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 2 (Koshelev 31, Zeytullaev 52)
Qatar 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Shatskikh (Uzbekistan) 58min; Abdulmajid (Qatar) 58min

GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qatar	6	5	0	1	14	4	15
Uzbekistan	6	3	2	1	14	4	11
Hong Kong	6	2	2	2	5	7	8
Bangladesh	6	0	0	6	1	19	0

22.02.06 Hong Kong-Qatar 0-3
22.02.06 Uzbekistan-Bangladesh 5-0
01.03.06 Bangladesh-Hong Kong 0-1
01.03.06 Qatar-Uzbekistan 2-1
16.08.06 Bangladesh-Qatar 1-4
16.08.06 Uzbekistan-Hong Kong 2-2
06.09.06 Hong Kong-Uzbekistan 0-0
06.09.06 Qatar-Bangladesh 3-0
11.10.06 Bangladesh-Uzbekistan 0-4
11.10.06 Qatar-Hong Kong 2-0
15.11.06 Hong Kong-Bangladesh 2-0
15.11.06 Uzbekistan-Qatar 2-0

Top two in each group qualify for finals. Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam qualify automatically as co-hosts

Finals tournament: July 7-29, 2007
Finals draw: December 19

CARIBBEAN CUP

2nd round

Group G

In Waterford, Barbados

Nov 19
Bermuda 0
St Vincent & The Grenadines 3 (James 58, S Samuel 66, 77)
HT: 0-0

Nov 19
Barbados 2 (N Forde 38, Skinner 44)
Bahamas 1 (Jean pen 76)
HT: 2-0

Nov 21
Bahamas 0
Bermuda 4 (K Smith pen 6, 28, Nusum 17, Steede 87)
HT: 0-3

Nov 21
Barbados 3 (James 16, N Forde 34, Ifill pen 60)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
HT: 2-0

Nov 23
Bahamas 2 (Christie 55, Moseley 65)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 3 (S Samuel 57, 61, W Charles 80)
HT: 0-0

Nov 23
Barbados 1 (Ifill 4)
Bermuda 1 (Nusum 42)
HT: 1-1

GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barbados	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
St Vincent & G	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Bermuda	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Bahamas	3	0	0	3	3	9	0

Group H

In Georgetown, Guyana

Nov 24
Dominican Republic 0
Guadeloupe 3 (Angloma 85, D Mocka 88, Phaan 90)
HT: 0-0

Nov 24
Guyana 6 (G Richardson 3, 12, Jerome 35, 54, Codrington 75, McKinnon 77)
Antigua & Barbuda 0
HT: 3-0

Nov 26
Dominican Republic 2 (DeJesus 70, Batista 81)
Antigua & Barbuda 0
HT: 0-0

Nov 26
Guyana 3 (Codrington 22, 68, G Richardson 25)
Guadeloupe 2 (D Mocka 60, 86)
HT: 2-0

Nov 28
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (Gregory 45)
Guadeloupe 3 (Gavarin 1, 70, Lambourde 13)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Davis (T&T)

Nov 28
Guyana 4 (G Richardson 45, Jerome 49, Codrington 57, Hercules 79)
Dominican Republic 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)

GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guyana	3	3	0	0	13	2	9
Guadeloupe	3	2	0	1	8	4	6
Dominican Rep	3	1	0	2	2	7	3
Antigua & B'da	3	0	0	3	1	11	0

Group I
In Fort-de-France, Martinique

Nov 8
Haiti 1 (Jean Baptiste 88)
Cuba 2 (Marquez 21, More 79)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Stewart (Jam)

Nov 8
Martinique 1 (Audel 61)
Surinam 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Small (Bar)

Nov 10
Cuba 3 (Alvarez 4, 26, Colome 41)
Surinam 1 (Aroepa 90)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 3,200. **Ref:** Stennett (Jam)

Nov 10
Martinique 1 (Bullet 3)
Haiti 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,200. **Ref:** Wood

Nov 12
Surinam 1 (Sastrodimedjo 75)
Haiti 1 (Jamil pen 78)
HT: 0-0

Nov 12
Martinique 0
Cuba 0

GROUP I – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cuba	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Martinique	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Haiti	3	0	1	2	2	4	1
Surinam	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Top two in each group qualified for the eight-team final round, to be played in Trinidad & Tobago from January 31 to February 11 next year. The third-placed teams enter a play-off group, the winners of which also qualify for the final round. Trinidad & Tobago qualify automatically for the final round

(Groups were named G, H and I because 1st round groups were named A, B, C, D, E and F)

The tournament doubles as the Caribbean qualifying campaign for the 2007 Gold Cup, to be staged in the United States from June 6 to 24. The winners, runners-up and third-placed side in the Caribbean Cup qualify for the Gold Cup finals

AFF CHAMPIONSHIP
(ASEAN Football Federation)

Qualifying round
In Bacolod City, Philippines

Nov 12: Brunei 3 East Timor 2; Philippines 1 Laos 2.
Nov 14: East Timor 0 Philippines 7; Cambodia 2 Laos 2.
Nov 16: Laos 3 East Timor 2; Brunei 1 Cambodia 1.
Nov 18: Philippines 1 Cambodia 0; Brunei 1 Laos 4.
Nov 20: Philippines 4 Brunei 1; East Timor 1 Cambodia 4.

AFF CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFYING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Laos	4	3	1	0	11	6	10
Philippines	4	3	0	1	13	3	9
Cambodia	4	1	2	1	7	5	5
Brunei	4	1	1	2	6	11	4
East Timor	4	0	0	4	5	17	0

Top two qualify for finals, to be staged in Singapore and Thailand from January 12 to February 3, 2007. Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Vietnam qualified automatically

FRIENDLIES

Thursday, November 9
Nov 9 - Al Ain
Kuwait 10 (Hakem 7, Laheeb 25, 35, 56, Al-Shaikh 27, Al-Otaibi 42, Al-Rashidi 62, 85, Al-Mutwa 73, Al-Mutairi 75)
Taiwan 0
HT: 5-0

Tuesday, November 14
Nov 14 - London
Australia 1 (Aloisi pen 25)
Ghana 1 (Agogo 74)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,379. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)
Australia: Schwarzer - Moore (Thwaite 46), Kisnorbo, Chipperfield, Grella (Wehrman 53), Wilkshire (Holman 75), Culina, Emerton, Sterjovski, Bresciano (Griffiths 78), Aloisi.
Ghana: R Kingston (Adjei 59) - Sarpei, Dickoh, E Addo, Mohamed, Appiah, L Kingston (Dramani 84), Essien, Muntari, Agogo, Ofori-Quaye (Gyan 71).

Nov 14 - La Courneuve, France
Mali 1 (K Kante 90)
Congo 0
HT: 0-0
Mali: Diakite (Tangara) - Kone, Diamoutene, Chelle (Mamady Sidibe), F Diawara (M Coulibaly), Tamboura, M Diarra, Sidi Keita (K Kante), D Sidibe, Diallo (Abouta), Dramane Traore (S Diarra).

Nov 14 - Wrexham
Wales 4 (Koumas 8, 14, Bellamy 77, Llewellyn 90)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,752. **Ref:** Wilmes (Lux)
Wales: Brown - Duffy (Ledley 46), Evans, Nyatanga, Ricketts, S Davies (M Jones 70), Robinson (Crofts 80), Koumas (C Davies 85), Giggs (Fletcher 46), Bellamy, Earnshaw (Llewellyn 60).
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Telser, Hasler, Ritter, Ritzberger (D Frick 60), Martin Stocklasa, M Buchel, T Beck (Kieber 89), F Burgmeier, D'Elia (Rohrer 60), M Frick (R Buchel 82).

Wednesday, November 15
Nov 15 - Aix-en-Provence, France
Algeria 1 (Saifi pen 88)
Burkina Faso 2 (Yameogo pen 60, Koffi 82)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 700. **Ref:** Falcone (Fra)
Algeria: Gaouaoui - Larbi, Bougherra (Yahia 73), Meniri (Beloufa 79), Zarabi, Bridji (Boulebda 70), Mansouri, Amri, Belhadj, Saifi, Bouguerra (Hima 77).
Burkina Faso: A Soulama - Tall, F Traore, Bamogo, Paul Coulibaly (Ouattara 77), Dagbei, Kabore (Sanou 80), Koffi, Yameogo (K Soulama 90), A Traore (Kone 69), Soumare (Pierre Coulibaly 46). *Sent off: Tall 78min.*

Nov 15 - Vienna
Austria 4 (Aufhauser 14, 25, 44, Feldhofer 80)
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Samuel 23)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 13,100. **Ref:** Matejek (Cze)
Austria: Manninger - Ertl (Standfest 59), Stranzl, Hiden (Feldhofer 46), Fuchs, Aufhauser, Sariyar (Junuzovic 59), Leitgeb (Garics 46), Ivanschitz, Linz (Akagunduz 71), Kuljic (Salmutter 71).
Trinidad & Tobago: Williams - Gray, Daniel, Lawrence, Charles, Edwards, Birchall, Whitley (Baptiste 77), Samuel, Scotland, Sealy (Theobald 46).

Nov 15 - La Paz
Bolivia 5 (Sossa 29, Arce 32, O Sanchez 41, Reyes 82, Pena 89)
El Salvador 1 (Erazo 51)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 25,000
Bolivia: Galarza (H Suarez) - N Suarez, O Sanchez, Mendez, Zabala, Reyes (Flores), Lima (Angulo), Galindo (Pena), Vaca (Pachi), Sossa (Salinas), Arce.
El Salvador: Gomez - W Torres, Anaya (Larios), R Torres (Guevara), Pacheco, J Martinez (Romero; Diaz), Merino (Moscoso), Murgas, Alvarez (Alas), Erazo, Quintanilla.

Nov 15 - Gaborone
Botswana 1 (Ramatlhakwane 19)
Swaziland 0
HT: 1-0

Nov 15 - Vina del Mar
Chile 3 (Ponce 30, Valdivia 50, Figueroa pen 62)
Paraguay 2 (Jimenez 67, Riveros 68)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Chile: Pinto - Ponce, J Vargas, Roco, Figueroa, Droguett (J Contreras 81), J Acuna (Zenteno 87), Iturra, Valdivia (Paredes 81), Pinilla (Neira 46), Monje (Rubio 89).
Paraguay: Bobadilla - Balbuena, Manzur, Morel Rodriguez, Bonet, Riveros, E Gonzalez (Irrazabal 85), Salcedo (Bogado 65), Ramos (J Gonzalez 54), Cabanas (Torres 78), O Cardozo (Jimenez 66). *Sent off: Balbuena 72min.*

Nov 15 - Prague
Czech Republic 1 (Baros 90)
Denmark 1 (Lovenkrands 28)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,852. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Czech Republic: M Cech - Ujfalusi, Jiranek (Zapotocny 81), Rozehnal, Grygera (Kovac 72), Jarolim (Sirl 46), Polak, Galasek (Heinz 46), Plasil, Baros, Vicek (Lafata 46).
Denmark: T Sorensen - Poulsen (Thygesen 58), Per Nielsen, Agger, N Jensen (Albrechtsen 62), Helveg, Kristiansen (Wurtz 50), Kamper (D Sorensen 66), Bendtner (Priske 85), D Jensen, Lovenkrands (Bech 67).

Nov 15 - London
Egypt 1 (Moteab 3)
South Africa 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Styles (Eng)
Egypt: El-Hadary - Fathi, Said (El-Saqqa 81), Gomaa, Meawwad (Azmi 53), Ghali (Shawky 61), Abd Rabbou, A Hassan, Aboutraika (A Hassan Farag 84), Zaki, Moteab (Hamza 84).
South Africa: Fernandez - Katza, Mkhonza, A Mokoena, Morris (Ntuka 88), Sibaya (Masilela 65), Tshabalala, Van Heerden (Gumbi 81), Pienaar (Schalkwyk 88), Zuma, Mphela (Nomvete 62).

Nov 15 - Tallinn
Estonia 2 (Oper 14, 67)
Belarus 1 (V Hleb pen 63)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Hermansen (Den)
Estonia: Poom - Allas, Stepanov, Piiroja, Jaager, Klavan (Reim 83), Teever (Viikmae 54), Rahn, Oper (Zahhovaiko 67), Dmitrijev (Neemelo 67), Terehhov (Sidorenkov 67).
Belarus: Zhevnov - Omelyanchuk, Radkov, Molosh, Kovba (Plaskonni 60), Strakhanovic, Kalachev (Kontsevoy 71), A Hleb, Suchkov (Korytko 46), V Hleb (Kirilchuk 75), Kornilenko.

Nov 15 - Saint-Denis
France 1 (Henry 26)
Greece 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 63,680. **Ref:** Wack (Ger)/Wezel (Ger)
France: Coupet - Sagnol (Clerc 46), Thuram, Gallas, Abidal (Evra 46), Wiltord, Vieira, Makelele (Diarra 46), Malouda, Saha (Anelka 46), Henry.
Greece: Nikopolidis - Kapsis, Katsouranis, Dellas (Goumas 66), Kyrgiakos, Fissas (Lagos 62), Basinas (Tziolis 86), Giannakopoulos (Gekas 46), Karagounis (Kafes 77), Amanatidis (Limberopoulos 46), Samaras.

Nov 15 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (Kobiashvili pen 38, 60)
Uruguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Godulyan (Ukr)
Georgia: Revishvili - Gogua (Kobakhidze 84), Salukvadze, Shashiashvili, Kandelaki, Burduli, Menteshashvili, Tskitishvili (Grigalashvili 70), Kobiashvili, Siradze (Tsinamdzghvrishvili 74), Demetradze (Ashvetia 74).
Uruguay: Carini - Scotti (Diogo 64), Lugano, Godin, Dario Rodriguez, Varela (Pereira 53), Gargano, Giacomazzi (Pouso 68), Estoyanoff (Vargas 83), Forlan, Canobbio (Castro 46).

Nov 15 - Amsterdam
Holland 1 (Van der Vaart 86)
England 1 (Rooney 37)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 45,090. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Holland: Timmer (Stekelenburg 46) - Boulahrouz (Jaliens 61), Mathijsen, Ooijer (Vennegoor of Hesselink 84), Emanuelson, Landzaat, Schaars, Seedorf, Van der Vaart, Kuijt (Huntelaar 61), Robben.
England: Robinson - Richards, Ferdinand, Terry, A Cole, Gerrard, Carrick, Lampard, J Cole (Richardson 78), A Johnson (Wright-Phillips 74), Rooney.

Nov 15 - Szekesfehervar
Hungary 1 (Priskin 36)
Canada 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Weiner (Ger)
Hungary: Vegh - Bodnar, Balogh, Juhasz, Vanczak, Vass, B Toth, Huszti (Rodenbucher 83), Sandor (Bodor 71), Hrepka (Farkas 70), Priskin (Torghelle 78).
Canada: Wagenaar - Jazic (Braz 28), Hainault, Nsaliwa, Pozniak, Bernier, Hutchinson (Peters 46), De Guzman (Nakajima-Farran 46), Hume (Ornoch 86), Radzinski, Friend.

Nov 15 - Bergamo
Italy 1 (Di Natale 39)
Turkey 1 (Materazzi og 42)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 24,386. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Italy: Buffon (Amelia 46) - Oddo (Zaccardo 46), Cannavaro (Barzagli 46), Materazzi, Zambrotta (Pasqual 70), De Rossi (Palombo 70), Camoranesi (Barone 59), Brocchi (Rocchi 59), Mauri (Aquilani 46), Di Natale, Gilardino (Bonazzoli 46).
Turkey: Rustu (Volkan 9) - Servet, Sabri (Ibrahim Toraman 84), Gokhan, Ibrahim Uzulmez, Emre Belozoglu (Gokdeniz 75), Mehmet Aurelio (Huseyin 84), Arda (Fatih Tekke 84), Hamit Altintop (Nuri 75), Tuncay (Tumer 62), Hakan Sukur (Halil Altintop 62).

Nov 15 - Le Mans, France
Ivory Coast 1 (Drogba 37)
Sweden 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,844. **Ref:** Fautrel (Fra)
Ivory Coast: Barry - Gohouri, K Toure (Zokora 46), Meite, Kante, Yapi Yapo, Fae (Y Toure 46), Boka, A Kone (Keita 46), Drogba (Dindane 63), B Kone (Traore 90).
Sweden: Shaaban - M Nilsson, Majstorovic, P Hansson, Edman, D Andersson (Holmen 85), Wilhelmsson (Ishizaki 46), Ericsson, Bakircioglu, L Nilsson (Berglund 63), Rosenberg.

Nov 15 - Kingston
Jamaica 1 (Hue pen 78)
Peru 1 (Sanchez 64)
HT: 0-0
Jamaica: Ricketts - Thomas, Daley, Tomlinson, G Reid (Phillips 58), Hue, Stephenson (Marshall 72), Fuller, Campbell-Ryce (Strickland 80), Virgo (J Johnson 58), Shelton (Bennett 68).
Peru: Butron - Prado, Vilchez, Rodriguez, Hidalgo, Cruzado, Cevasco, Vargas, Marino (Sanchez 60), Mostto (Alva 75), Farfan.

Nov 15 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Togo 0
Att: 1,417. **Ref:** Richards (Wal)
Luxembourg: Gillet - Kintziger, Strasser, Hoffmann, Mutsch, A Leweck (Sagramola 90), Ferreira (Payal 51), Peters, Bettmer (Lombardelli 86), Remy, Huss (Joachim 46).
Togo: Agassa - Mamah, Abalo, Eninful, Senaya, Erassa, Coubageat (Forson 68), Kassim, Amewou, Idrissou (Omorou 88), Adebayor.

Nov 15 - Paola
Malta 1 (G Agius 86)
Lithuania 4 (Danilevicius 37, 67, Radzinevicius 58, Kavaliauskas 90)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Lawlor (Wal)
Malta: M Muscat (Hogg 46) - Azzopardi, Said, Scicluna, Wellman, Michael Mifsud (Sammut 42), Woods (Cohen 70), Mallia (G Agius 83), Schembri (Scerri 19), Pullicino (Bajada 62), Pace.
Lithuania: Grybauskas - Stankevicius, Dziaukstas, Skerla, Paulauskas (D Zutautas 72), Miceika (Preiksaitis 66), Barasa (Beniusis 49), Kalonas (Gedgaudas 72), Morinas (Piliibaitis 76), Danilevicius (Kavaliauskas 82), Radzinevicius.

Nov 15 - Rabat
Morocco 6 (Lembarki 40, 64, Ouaddouch 61, Boukhari 68, Mahdoufi 71, Souari 90)
Gabon 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** O Sidibe (Mli)
Morocco: El Jarmouni - Zerka (Ouaddouch 54), El Karkouri, Benaskar, Erbate (Dhiba 80), El Kaddouri (Mahdoufi 46), Safri, Basser, Aboub (Brazi 46), Boussoufa (Boukhari 46), Lembarki (Souari 69).
Gabon: Nguema - Moudounga, Ngoma (Ervin 70), Rodrigue, Tchikaya, Thierry, Moudamba (Danny 87), Narcisse (Copa 46), Alain, Abessolo (Ulrich 46), Roguy.

Nov 15 - Belgrade
Serbia 1 (Vidic 6)
Norway 1 (Carew 22)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Kasnaferis (Gre)
Serbia: Stojkovic - Ivanovic, Vidic (Duljaj 46), Krstajic (Dragutinovic 46), Tosic, N Kovacevic, Ergic, Stankovic (Koroman 46), Jankovic (Markovic 63), Trisovic (Krasic 46), Zigic (Lazovic 46).
Norway: Opdal - Rambekk (Riseth 62), Hagen, Kippe, J A Riise, Stromstad (B H Riise 62), Haestad, Grindheim (Solli 90), Vaagan Moen (Arst 62), Iversen (Hoff 79), Carew (Nevland 79).

Nov 15 - Zilina
Slovakia 3 (Mintal 8, Sapara 53, Karhan pen 78)
Bulgaria 1 (Karadzinov 80)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,823. **Ref:** Granat (Pol)
Slovakia: Contofalsky (Hajduch 46) - Singlar, Skrtel, Klimpl, Cech, Strba (M Petras 64), P Petras (Sestak 61), Sapara (Janocko 74), Svento, Mintal (Karhan 61), Vittek (Holosko 46).
Bulgaria: Ivankov (Kolev 46) - Y Todorov, Iliev, Tuncev (Zhelev 46), Zanev, Kishishev (Peev 19), Georgiev (Yovov 57), Telkiyski (Karadzinov 61), Yankov, Bojinov (S Todorov 54), Berbatov.

Nov 15 - Cadiz
Spain 0
Romania 1 (Marica 59)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,000. **Ref:** Messina (Ita)
Spain: Casillas - Angel (Sergio Ramos 74), Juanito, Javi Navarro, Antonio Lopez, Angulo, Xabi Alonso (Oubina 46), Fabregas (Marcos Senna 46), Silva, Villa, Morientes.
Romania: Coman - Marin, Tamas (Goian 87), Chivu (Ghionea 87), Rat (Stefan 89), Maldarasanu (Rosu 46), O Petre, Cocis, Marica, Niculescu (Buga 46), D Niculae (Dica 74).

Nov 15 - Basle
Switzerland 1 (Maicon og 70)
Brazil 2 (Luisao 22, Kaka 35)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 39,000. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - Lichtsteiner (Inler 85), Djourou (Muller 66), Senderos, Magnin, Vogel (Dzemaili 46), Vonlanthen (D Degen 79), Barnetta, Cabanas (H Yakin 73), Streller (Margairaz 46), Frei.
Brazil: Helton - Maicon, Luisao, Juan, Adriano Correia, Elano (Diego 89), Fernando (Tinga 62), Dudu Cearense (Daniel Carvalho 90), Kaka, Robinho (Ronaldinho 62), Rafael Sobis (Ricardo Oliveira 70).

Nov 15 - Rades
Tunisia 2 (Lachkham 15, Zouaghi 55)
Libya 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Zekrini (Alg)
Tunisia: Kasraoui - Boussaidi, Ayari, Saidi, Hagui, Zaiem (Ziadi), Zouaghi, Ragued (Boujelbene), Belaid (Ben Saada), Zitouni (Dhaouadi), Lachkham (Nafti).

Nov 15 - Caracas
Venezuela 2 (Villafraz 3, Rey 52)
Guatemala 1 (Martinez 74)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Andarcia (Ven)
Venezuela: Vega (Toyo 46) - H Gonzalez (Gomez 64), A Cichero, Rey, Rojas (Rouga 46), Villafraz, M Mea Vitali (Giroletti 58), Paez, Guerra (Perozo 80), Maldonado (Vallenilla 46), De Ornelas (Fedor 55). *Sent off: Paez 20min.*
Guatemala: Trigueno - G Cabrera, Melgar, E Ponciano, Medina, Contreras (Villatoro 63), Thompson, De Mata (Martinez 46), Quinones, Sandoval, Avila (Garcia 63).

Nov 15 - Harare
Zimbabwe 3 (Mushangazhike 12, Gwekwerere 17, Matawu 50)
Namibia 2 (Helu 36, Khaiseb pen 52)
HT: 2-1

Saturday, November 18
Nov 18 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 1 (Mwaikimba 27)
Angola 1 (Manucho 83)
HT: 1-0

Sunday, November 19
Nov 19 - Panama City
Panama 1 (Tejada pen 38)
Peru 2 (Mostto 4, Alva 80)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Vidal (Pan)
Panama: McFarlane - Moreno, Guardia, L Henriquez (Rivera 59), Solis (M Torres 52), Gomez, Herrera (Rodriguez 55), Arosemena, Phillips (G Torres 57), Tejada, Solanilla.
Peru: Penny - Vilchez, Prado, Cevasco, Torres (Sanchez 58), Mostto (Garcia 58), Rodriguez, Del Solar (Cruzado 68), L Hernandez (Fernandez 62), Marino (Ross 70), Alva. *Sent off: Sanchez 85min.*

Wednesday, November 29
Nov 29 - San Salvador
El Salvador 0
Panama 0

Wednesday, December 6
Dec 6 - Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates 2 (Khater 26, Srour pen 86)
Poland 5 (Grzelak 8, 50, Wasilewski 17, Magdon 87, Matusiak 90)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Al-Hilali (Oma)
UAE: Naser (M Mohammed 46) - Masoud (Hassan 46), Salem (Ali Omar 46), F Ali, Obaid (Yuma 46), Sa'ad (Akiel 46), Abbas, Khater, Mubarak (Alo Ali 46), Darwish (S Mohammed 46), Kas (Srour 46).
Poland: Fabianski (Pawelek 46) - Wasilewski, Kokoszka, Magdon, Wawrzyniak, Budka (Lobodzinski 46), Dudka, Murawski, Giza (Iwanski 46), Gargula (Kolendowicz 46), Grzelak (Matusiak 63).

2008 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	1	1	0	0	5	0	3
Gabon	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Madagascar	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

Djibouti withdrew

02.09.06 Gabon-Madagascar 4-0
08.10.06 Ivory Coast-Gabon 5-0
24.03.07 Madagascar-Ivory Coast
02.06.07 Ivory Coast-Madagascar
16.06.07 Madagascar-Gabon
08.09.07 Gabon-Ivory Coast

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Mauritania	2	1	0	1	5	3	3
Burundi	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Botswana	2	0	1	1	0	4	1

02.09.06 Egypt-Burundi 4-1
02.09.06 Mauritania-Botswana 4-0
07.10.06 Botswana-Egypt 0-0
08.10.06 Burundi-Mauritania 3-1
24.03.07 Botswana-Burundi
24.03.07 Egypt-Mauritania
02.06.07 Burundi-Botswana
02.06.07 Mauritania-Egypt
16.06.07 Botswana-Mauritania
16.06.07 Burundi-Egypt
08.09.07 Egypt-Botswana
08.09.07 Mauritania-Burundi

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Uganda	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Niger	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Lesotho	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

02.09.06 Nigeria-Niger 2-0
02.09.06 Uganda-Lesotho 3-0
08.10.06 Lesotho-Nigeria 0-1
08.10.06 Niger-Uganda 0-0
24.03.07 Lesotho-Niger
24.03.07 Nigeria-Uganda
02.06.07 Niger-Lesotho
02.06.07 Uganda-Nigeria
16.06.07 Lesotho-Uganda
16.06.07 Niger-Nigeria
08.09.07 Nigeria-Lesotho
08.09.07 Uganda-Niger

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Sudan	2	1	0	1	3	1	3
Seychelles	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Mauritius	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

03.09.06 Mauritius-Tunisia 0-0
03.09.06 Sudan-Seychelles 3-0
07.10.06 Seychelles-Mauritius 2-1
07.10.06 Tunisia-Sudan 1-0
24.03.07 Mauritius-Sudan
24.03.07 Seychelles-Tunisia
02.06.07 Sudan-Mauritius
02.06.07 Tunisia-Seychelles
16.06.07 Seychelles-Sudan
16.06.07 Tunisia-Mauritius
08.09.07 Mauritius-Seychelles
08.09.07 Sudan-Tunisia

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Liberia	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Eq Guinea	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Rwanda	2	0	0	2	2	6	0

03.09.06 Equatorial Guinea-Liberia 2-1
03.09.06 Rwanda-Cameroon 0-3
07.10.06 Cameroon-Equatorial Guinea 3-0
08.10.06 Liberia-Rwanda 3-2
24.03.07 Cameroon-Liberia
24.03.07 Equatorial Guinea-Rwanda
02.06.07 Liberia-Cameroon
02.06.07 Rwanda-Equatorial Guinea
16.06.07 Cameroon-Rwanda
16.06.07 Liberia-Equatorial Guinea
08.09.07 Equatorial Guinea-Cameroon
08.09.07 Rwanda-Liberia

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Eritrea	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Swaziland	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Kenya	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

02.09.06 Kenya-Eritrea 1-2
03.09.06 Swaziland-Angola 0-2
08.10.06 Angola-Kenya 3-1
08.10.06 Eritrea-Swaziland 0-0
24.03.07 Angola-Eritrea
24.03.07 Kenya-Swaziland
02.06.07 Eritrea-Angola
02.06.07 Swaziland-Kenya
16.06.07 Angola-Swaziland
16.06.07 Eritrea-Kenya
08.09.07 Kenya-Angola
08.09.07 Swaziland-Eritrea

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tanzania	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Senegal	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Burkina Faso	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Mozambique	2	0	1	1	0	2	1

02.09.06 Senegal-Mozambique 2-0
02.09.06 Tanzania-Burkina Faso 2-1
07.10.06 Burkina Faso-Senegal 1-0
08.10.06 Mozambique-Tanzania 0-0
24.03.07 Burkina Faso-Mozambique
24.03.07 Senegal-Tanzania
02.06.07 Mozambique-Burkina Faso
02.06.07 Tanzania-Senegal
16.06.07 Burkina Faso-Tanzania
16.06.07 Mozambique-Senegal
08.09.07 Senegal-Burkina Faso
08.09.07 Tanzania-Mozambique

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Algeria	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Gambia	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Cape Verde Is	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Guinea	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

03.09.06 Gambia-Cape Verde Islands 2-0
03.09.06 Guinea-Algeria 0-0
07.10.06 Algeria-Gambia 1-0
08.10.06 Cape Verde Islands-Guinea 1-0
24.03.07 Algeria-Cape Verde Islands
24.03.07 Gambia-Guinea
02.06.07 Cape Verde Islands-Algeria
02.06.07 Guinea-Gambia
16.06.07 Algeria-Guinea
16.06.07 Cape Verde Islands-Gambia
08.09.07 Gambia-Algeria
08.09.07 Guinea-Cape Verde Islands

Group 9

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Benin	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Togo	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Sierra Leone	2	0	1	1	0	2	1

03.09.06 Sierra Leone-Mali 0-0
03.09.06 Togo-Benin 2-1
08.10.06 Benin-Sierra Leone 2-0
08.10.06 Mali-Togo 1-0
24.03.07 Mali-Benin
24.03.07 Togo-Sierra Leone
02.06.07 Benin-Mali
02.06.07 Sierra Leone-Togo
16.06.07 Benin-Togo
16.06.07 Mali-Sierra Leone
08.09.07 Sierra Leone-Benin
08.09.07 Togo-Mali

Group 10

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Namibia	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Ethiopia	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Libya	2	0	1	1	1	2	1

03.09.06 DR Congo-Namibia 3-2
03.09.06 Ethiopia-Libya 1-0
07.10.06 Namibia-Ethiopia 1-0
08.10.06 Libya-DR Congo 1-1
24.03.07 DR Congo-Ethiopia
24.03.07 Libya-Namibia
02.06.07 Ethiopia-DR Congo
02.06.07 Namibia-Libya
16.06.07 Libya-Ethiopia
16.06.07 Namibia-DR Congo
08.09.07 DR Congo-Libya
08.09.07 Ethiopia-Namibia

Group 11

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Congo	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
South Africa	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Zambia	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Chad	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

02.09.06 South Africa-Congo 0-0
03.09.06 Chad-Zambia 0-2
07.10.06 Congo-Chad 3-0
07.10.06 Zambia-South Africa 0-1
24.03.07 Chad-South Africa
24.03.07 Congo-Zambia
02.06.07 South Africa-Chad
02.06.07 Zambia-Congo
16.06.07 Congo-South Africa
16.06.07 Zambia-Chad
08.09.07 Chad-Congo
08.09.07 South Africa-Zambia

Group 12

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Malawi	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Zimbabwe	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

02.09.06 Morocco-Malawi 2-0
07.10.06 Malawi-Zimbabwe 1-0
24.03.07 Zimbabwe-Morocco
02.06.07 Morocco-Zimbabwe
16.06.07 Malawi-Morocco
08.09.07 Zimbabwe-Malawi

Group winners and the three best runners-up qualify for finals. Ghana qualify automatically as hosts

Finals tournament:
January 20-February 10, 2008

CLUB FOOTBALL EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Nov 22
Werder Bremen (Ger) 1 (Mertesacker 27)
Chelsea (Eng) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 36,900. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Werder: Wiese - Fritz, Mertesacker, Naldo, Wome, Borowski, Frings, D Jensen (Hunt 78), Diego, Klose (Klasnic 90), Hugo Almeida (Schulz 87).
Chelsea: Cudicini - Geremi, Terry, Boulahrouz, A Cole, Essien, Makelele, Ballack (Wright-Phillips 77), J Cole, Drogba (Shevchenko 59), Mikel (Robben 59).

Nov 22
Levski Sofia (Bul) 0
Barcelona (Spa) 2 (Giuly 5, Iniesta 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)
Levski: Petkov - Milanov, Topuzakov, Tomasic, Lucio Wagner, Borimirov, Eromoigbe, S Angelov (Telkiyski 58), Bardon, Yovov (Ognyanov 73), Domovchiyski (G Ivanov 57).
Barcelona: Valdes - Zambrotta, Puyol, Marquez (Oleguer 63), Silvinho, Giuly (Xavi 58), Motta, Deco, Iniesta (Ezquerro 81), Gudjohnsen, Ronaldinho.

Dec 5
Chelsea 2 (Shevchenko 27, Wright-Phillips 83)
Levski Sofia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 33,358. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Chelsea: Hilario - Paulo Ferreira (Diarra 58), Boulahrouz, Ricardo Carvalho, Bridge, Lampard, Essien, Ballack, Shevchenko (Kalou 69), Drogba, Robben (Wright-Phillips 69).
Levski: Mitrev - Milanov, Topuzakov, Tomasic, S Angelov, Borimirov, Eromoigbe, N Dimitrov (Baltanov 59), Bardon, Yovov (Koprivarov 70), Domovchiyski (G Ivanov 75).

Dec 5
Barcelona 2 (Ronaldinho 13, Gudjohnsen 18)
Werder Bremen 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 95,000. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Barcelona: Valdes - Zambrotta, Marquez, Puyol, Van Bronckhorst, Iniesta (Xavi 73), Motta (Thuram 62), Deco, Giuly (Ezquerro 85), Gudjohnsen, Ronaldinho.
Werder: Wiese - Fritz, Mertesacker, Naldo, Wome (Hunt 80), D Jensen, Frings, Borowski, Diego, Klose, Hugo Almeida (Klasnic 71).

GROUP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	6	4	1	1	10	4	13
Barcelona	6	3	2	1	12	4	11
Werder	6	3	1	2	7	5	10
Levski	6	0	0	6	1	17	0

Sep 12 Chelsea-Werder Bremen 2-0
Sep 12 Barcelona-Levski Sofia 5-0
Sep 27 Levski Sofia-Chelsea 1-3
Sep 27 Werder Bremen-Barcelona 1-1
Oct 18 Werder Bremen-Levski Sofia 2-0
Oct 18 Chelsea-Barcelona 1-0
Oct 31 Levski Sofia-Werder Bremen 0-3
Oct 31 Barcelona-Chelsea 2-2
Nov 22 Werder Bremen-Chelsea 1-0
Nov 22 Levski Sofia-Barcelona 0-2
Dec 5 Chelsea-Levski Sofia 2-0
Dec 5 Barcelona-Werder Bremen 2-0

Group B

Nov 22
Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Crespo 36)
Sporting Lisbon (Por) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 46,843. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Inter: Julio Cesar - Maicon, Cordoba, Materazzi, Grosso (Cambiasso 82), Zanetti, Dacourt (Burdisso 90), Vieira, Stankovic, Ibrahimovic, Crespo.
Sporting: Ricardo - Caneira (Abel 15; Miguel Veloso 27), Tonel, Anderson Polga, Tello, Paredes, Joao Moutinho, Custodio, Nani, Farnerud (Carlos Martins 57), Alecsandro.

Nov 22
Spartak Moscow (Rus) 2 (Kalinichenko 16, Kovac 72)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 2 (Pizarro 22, 39)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
Spartak: Zuev - Jiranek, Geder (Rebko 87), Stranzl, Shishkin, Bystrov, Kovac, Titov, Mozart, Kalinichenko, Pavlyuchenko.
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol, Demichelis, Van Buyten, Lell, Van Bommel, Ottl, Salihamidzic (Scholl 84), Schweinsteiger, Pizarro, Makaay.

Dec 5
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Bueno 31)
Spartak Moscow 3 (Pavlyuchenko 7, Kalinichenko 16, Boyarintsev 89)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Vollquartz (Den)
Sporting: Ricardo - Miguel Garcia (Miguel Veloso 28), Tonel, Anderson Polga, Ronny, Joao Moutinho, Paredes (Nani 60), Yannick, Tello, Bueno (Alecsandro 68), Liedson.
Spartak: Zuev - Jiranek, Geder, Stranzl, Shishkin, Bystrov (Dzyuba 90), Kovac, Titov, Mozart, Kalinichenko (Boyarintsev 64), Pavlyuchenko (Owusu-Abeyie 74).

Dec 5
Bayern Munich 1 (Makaay 62)
Internazionale 1 (Vieira 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 66,000. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol, Lucio, Van Buyten, Lahm, Van Bommel (Demichelis 72), Ottl, Schweinsteiger, Salihamidzic (Deisler 79), Pizarro, Makaay (Santa Cruz 83).
Inter: Toldo - Maicon, Andreolli, Samuel, Maxwell, Solari (Grosso 83), Vieira, Figo (Recoba 70), Zanetti, Gonzalez, Ibrahimovic (Crespo 46).

GROUP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	6	3	3	0	10	3	12
Inter	6	3	1	2	5	5	10
Spartak	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Sporting	6	1	2	3	3	6	5

Sep 12 Sporting Lisbon-Internazionale 1-0
Sep 12 Bayern Munich-Spartak Moscow ... 4-0
Sep 27 Spartak Moscow-Sporting Lisbon .. 1-1
Sep 27 Internazionale-Bayern Munich 0-2
Oct 18 Internazionale-Spartak Moscow 2-1
Oct 18 Sporting Lisbon-Bayern Munich 0-1
Oct 31 Spartak Moscow-Internazionale 0-1
Oct 31 Bayern Munich-Sporting Lisbon 0-0
Nov 22 Internazionale-Sporting Lisbon 1-0
Nov 22 Spartak Moscow-Bayern Munich ... 2-2
Dec 5 Sporting Lisbon-Spartak Moscow .. 1-3
Dec 5 Bayern Munich-Internazionale 1-1

Group C

Nov 22
Bordeaux (Fra) 3 (Alonso 22, Laslandes 47, Faubert 50)
Galatasaray (Tur) 1 (Inamoto 73)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 22,834. **Ref:** Hrinak (Slk)
Bordeaux: Rame - Faubert, Enakarhire, Planus, Jurietti, Alonso, Mavuba, Micoud (Dalmat 79), Wendel (Ducasse 68), Laslandes, Darcheville (Obertan 46).
Galatasaray: Mondragon - Sabri, Song, Tolga, Cihan, Hasan Sas (Ergun 69), Inamoto, Ayhan, Arda, Hakan (Mehmet 63), Ilic (Umit 46).
Sent off: Arda 59min.

Nov 22
Liverpool (Eng) 2 (Gerrard 65, Crouch 89)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 41,948. **Ref:** Messina (Ita)
Liverpool: Reina - Finnan, Carragher, Agger, Riise, Pennant (Bellamy 79), Xabi Alonso (Zenden 21), Gerrard, Gonzalez (Luis Garcia 36), Crouch, Kuijt.
PSV: Gomes - Kromkamp, Da Costa, Alex, Salcido, Mendez (Beerens 81), Simons, Feher (Tardelli 68), Afellay, Farfan, Kone.

Dec 5
Galatasaray 3 (Necati 24, Okan 28, Ilic 79)
Liverpool 2 (Fowler 22, 90)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Galatasaray: Mondragon - Cihan, Tomas, Emre (Tolga 46), Ergun, Sabri, Inamoto, Okan, Carrusca (Mehmet 75), Umit, Necati (Ilic 45).
Liverpool: Dudek - Peltier, Carragher, Agger, Riise, Pennant, Xabi Alonso (Miki 84), Paletta, Guthrie (Luis Garcia 66), Bellamy (Crouch 74), Fowler.

Dec 5
PSV Eindhoven 1 (Alex 87)
Bordeaux 3 (Faubert 7, Dalmat 25, Darcheville 37)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Iturralde Gonzalez (Spa)
PSV: Gomes - Kromkamp, Alex, Addo (Kluivert 46), Reiziger, Mendez, Simons, Cocu, Aissati (Culina 62), Farfan, Tardelli (Kone 46).
Bordeaux: Rame - Jemmali, Enakarhire, Cid, Marange, Faubert, Mavuba, Ducasse, Dalmat (Obertan 80), Darcheville (Perea 70), Laslandes.

GROUP C – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
PSV	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Bordeaux	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Galatasaray	6	1	1	4	7	12	4

Sep 12 Galatasaray-Bordeaux 0-0
Sep 12 PSV Eindhoven-Liverpool 0-0
Sep 27 Liverpool-Galatasaray 3-2
Sep 27 Bordeaux-PSV Eindhoven 0-1
Oct 18 Bordeaux-Liverpool 0-1
Oct 18 Galatasaray-PSV Eindhoven 1-2
Oct 31 Liverpool-Bordeaux 3-0
Oct 31 PSV Eindhoven-Galatasaray 2-0
Nov 22 Bordeaux-Galatasaray 3-1
Nov 22 Liverpool-PSV Eindhoven 2-0
Dec 5 Galatasaray-Liverpool 3-2
Dec 5 PSV Eindhoven-Bordeaux 1-3

Group D

Nov 22
Valencia (Spa) 2 (Angulo 45, Morientes 46)
Olympiakos (Gre) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,000. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Valencia: Canizares - Miguel, Albiol, Ayala, Curro Torres, Joaquin, Baraja (Hugo Viana 86), Pallardo, Silva, Villa (Morientes 22), Angulo (Tavano 75).
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Pantos, Julio Cesar, Kostoulas, Zewlakow, Okkas, Stoltidis (Babangida 62), Rivaldo, Djordjevic, Castillo (Borja 70), Constantinou (Maric 17).

Nov 22
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Marica 61)
Roma (Ita) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,673. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Shakhtar: Shust - Srna, Kucher, Chygrynskyi, Rat, Fernandinho (Gay 90), Duljaj, Tymoshchuk, Jadson (Elano 81), Marica (Aghahowa 75), Brandao.
Roma: Doni - Cassetti, Mexes, Ferrari (Pizarro 69), Panucci, Perrotta, De Rossi, Aquilani (Montella 78), Taddei, Totti, Mancini (Vucinic 78).

Dec 5
Olympiakos 1 (Castillo 54)
Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Matuzalem 27)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Bennett (Eng)
Olympiakos: Nikopolidis - Pantos (Constantinou 75), Zewlakow, Julio Cesar, Domi (Georgatos 83), Maric, Stoltidis, Rivaldo, Djordjevic, Babangida (Borja 83), Castillo.
Shakhtar: Shust - Srna, Chygrynskyi, Kucher, Rat, Jadson, Matuzalem (Duljaj 77), Tymoshchuk, Fernandinho (Elano 81), Brandao, Marica (Aghahowa 66). *Sent off: Rat 90min.*

Dec 5
Roma 1 (Panucci 13)
Valencia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Roma: Doni - Panucci, Mexes, Chivu, Tonetto, De Rossi (Perrotta 75), Virga (Rosi 83), Cassetti, Taddei, Mancini, Vucinic (Okaka Chuka 90).
Valencia: Butelle - Curro Torres, David Navarro, Albiol, Cerra, Joaquin, Hugo Viana, Pallardo (Corcoles 90), Jorge Lopez (Romero 74), Aaron (Nacho Insa 27), Tavano.

GROUP D – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valencia	6	4	1	1	12	6	13
Roma	6	3	1	2	8	4	10
Shakhtar	6	1	3	2	6	11	6
Olympiakos	6	0	3	3	6	11	3

Sep 12 Olympiakos-Valencia 2-4
Sep 12 Roma-Shakhtar Donetsk 4-0
Sep 27 Shakhtar Donetsk-Olympiakos 2-2
Sep 27 Valencia-Roma 2-1
Oct 18 Valencia-Shakhtar Donetsk 2-0
Oct 18 Olympiakos-Roma 0-1
Oct 31 Shakhtar Donetsk-Valencia 2-2
Oct 31 Roma-Olympiakos 1-1
Nov 22 Valencia-Olympiakos 2-0
Nov 22 Shakhtar Donetsk-Roma 1-0
Dec 5 Olympiakos-Shakhtar Donetsk 1-1
Dec 5 Roma-Valencia 1-0

Group E

Nov 21
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 1 (Dica 69)
Kyiv Dynamo (Ukr) 1 (Cernat 29)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Jara (Cze)
Steaua: Cernea - Stancu, Ghionea, Goian, Marin, Nicolita, Petre, Paraschiv (Radoi 66), Oprita (Cristocea 55), Dica (Lovin 90), Thereau.
Dynamo: Shovkovskyi - Markovic, Rodrigo, Rodolfo (Gavrancic 46), El Kaddouri, Husiev, Yussuf, Bialkevich, Cernat (Diogo Rincon 78), Shatskikh, Kleber (Milevskyi 67).

Nov 21
Real Madrid (Spa) 2 (Diarra 39, Van Nistelrooy 83)
Lyon (Fra) 2 (Carew 11, Malouda 31)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 78,677. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Sergio Ramos, Ivan Helguera, Cannavaro, Roberto Carlos, Diarra, Emerson (Cassano 76), Raul, Guti (Reyes 21), Robinho, Van Nistelrooy.
Lyon: Coupet - Reveillere, Cris, Squillaci, Abidal, Tiago, Toulalan (Diarra 90), Juninho, Clerc, Carew, Malouda.

Dec 6
Kyiv Dynamo 2 (Shatskikh 13, 27)
Real Madrid 2 (Ronaldo 86, pen 88)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 33,000. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Dynamo: Shovkovskyi - Markovic, Rodrigo, Rodolfo (Mandzyuk 34), Nesmachnyi, Husiev, Yussuf, Mikhalik, Bialkevich, Milevskyi (Rotan 85), Shatskikh.
Real Madrid: Diego Lopez - Michel Salgado, Torres, Mejia, Roberto Carlos, Nieto (Valero 74), Beckham, De la Red (Javi Garcia 70), Diarra, Ronaldo, Cassano.

Dec 6
Lyon 1 (Diarra 12)
Steaua Bucharest 1 (Dica 2)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 39,351. **Ref:** Ceferin (Sln)
Lyon: Coupet - Reveillere, Cacapa, Muller, Berthod, Tiago (Toulalan 65), Diarra, Kallstrom, Govou (Remy 80), Carew (Wiltord 65), Ben Arfa.
Steaua: Cernea - Stancu, Ghionea, Goian, Marin, Nicolita, Radoi (Petre 78), Paraschiv, Cristocea (Oprita 82), Dica, Thereau (Badea 73).

GROUP E – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	6	4	2	0	12	3	14
Real Madrid	6	3	2	1	14	8	11
Steaua	6	1	2	3	7	11	5
Kyiv Dynamo	6	0	2	4	5	16	2

Sep 13 Kyiv Dynamo-Steaua Bucharest 1-4
Sep 13 Lyon-Real Madrid 2-0
Sep 26 Real Madrid-Kyiv Dynamo 5-1
Sep 26 Steaua Bucharest-Lyon 0-3
Oct 17 Steaua Bucharest-Real Madrid 1-4
Oct 17 Kyiv Dynamo-Lyon 0-3
Nov 1 Real Madrid-Steaua Bucharest 1-0
Nov 1 Lyon-Kyiv Dynamo 1-0
Nov 21 Steaua Bucharest-Kyiv Dynamo 1-1
Nov 21 Real Madrid-Lyon 2-2
Dec 6 Kyiv Dynamo-Real Madrid 2-2
Dec 6 Lyon-Steaua Bucharest 1-1

Group F

Nov 21
Celtic (Sco) 1 (Nakamura 81)
Manchester United (Eng) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 60,632. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Celtic: Boruc - Telfer, Balde, McManus, Naylor, Nakamura (Miller 85), Gravesen, Lennon, Sno (Jarosik 46), Vennegoor of Hesselink, Zurawski (Maloney 46).
Man Utd: Van der Sar - Neville, Ferdinand, Vidic, Heinze (Evra 87), Cristiano Ronaldo, Carrick (O'Shea 87), Scholes, Giggs, Saha, Rooney.

Nov 21
Benfica (Por) 3 (Leo 14, Miccoli 16, 37)
FC Copenhagen (Den) 1 (Allback 89)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 47,500. **Ref:** Rosetti (Ita)
Benfica: Quim - Nelson, Anderson, Ricardo Rocha, Leo, Katsouranis (Mantorras 86), Petit, Nuno Assis (Karagounis 80), Simao, Nuno Gomes, Miccoli (Karyaka 70).
Copenhagen: Christiansen - Jacobsen, Gravgaard, Hangeland, Wendt (Bergvold 80), Silberbauer (Kvist 59), Linderoth, Norregaard (Berglund 59), Hutchinson, Gronkjaer, Allback.

Dec 6
Manchester United 3 (Vidic 45, Giggs 61, Saha 75)
Benfica 1 (Nelson 27)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 74,955. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Man Utd: Van der Sar - Neville, Ferdinand, Vidic, Evra (Heinze 67), Cristiano Ronaldo, Carrick, Scholes (Solskjaer 79), Giggs (Fletcher 74), Saha, Rooney.
Benfica: Quim - Nelson, Luisao, Ricardo Rocha, Leo, Katsouranis, Petit, Simao, Nuno Assis (Karagounis 73), Nuno Gomes, Miccoli (Paulo Jorge 64).

Dec 6
FC Copenhagen 3 (Hutchinson 2, Gronkjaer 27, Allback 57)
Celtic 1 (Jarosik 75)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 41,500. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)
Copenhagen: Christiansen - Jacobsen (Norregaard 56), Hangeland, Gravgaard, Wendt, Silberbauer, Linderoth, Kvist, Gronkjaer (Berglund 90), Allback (Bergvold 81), Hutchinson.
Celtic: Boruc - Wilson, Balde, McManus (O'Dea 73), Naylor, Gravesen (Nakamura 69), Lennon, Jarosik, McGeady (Pearson 69), Zurawski, Miller.

GROUP F – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	6	4	0	2	10	5	12
Celtic	6	3	0	3	8	9	9
Benfica	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Copenhagen	6	2	1	3	5	8	7

Sep 13 Manchester Utd-Celtic 3-2
Sep 13 FC Copenhagen-Benfica 0-0
Sep 26 Benfica-Manchester Utd 0-1
Sep 26 Celtic-FC Copenhagen 1-0
Oct 17 Celtic-Benfica 3-0
Oct 17 Manchester Utd-FC Copenhagen ... 3-0
Nov 1 Benfica-Celtic 3-0
Nov 1 FC Copenhagen-Manchester Utd ... 1-0
Nov 21 Celtic-Manchester Utd 1-0
Nov 21 Benfica-FC Copenhagen 3-1
Dec 6 Manchester Utd-Benfica 3-1
Dec 6 FC Copenhagen-Celtic 3-1

Group G

Nov 21
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 0
FC Porto (Por) 2 (Quaresma 2, Gonzalez 61)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
CSKA: Akinfeev - V Berezutsky, Semberas, A Berezutsky, Krasic (Olic 66), Rahimic, Dudu Cearense (Kochubey 27), Aldonin, Zhirkov, Vagner Love, Daniel Carvalho.
Porto: Helton - Bosingwa, Pepe, Bruno Alves, Fucile, Gonzalez, Paulo Assuncao, Raul Meireles (Jorginho 70), Quaresma (Alan 88), Helder Postiga (Bruno Moraes 77), Lopez.

Nov 21
Arsenal (Eng) 3 (Van Persie 52, Eboue 83, Julio Baptista 88)
Hamburg (Ger) 1 (Van der Vaart 4)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 59,962. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Arsenal: Lehmann - Eboue, Toure, Senderos, Clichy, Hleb (Julio Baptista 81), Fabregas, Flamini, Van Persie (Adebayor 70), Ljungberg (Walcott 75), Henry.
Hamburg: Wachter - Benjamin, Reinhardt, Mathijsen, Atouba (Ljuboja 67), Mahdavikia (Feilhaber 45), Wicky (Lauth 87), Trochowski, Van der Vaart, Fillinger, Sanogo.

Dec 6
FC Porto 0
Arsenal 0
Att: 41,500. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Porto: Helton - Bosingwa, Pepe, Bruno Alves, Fucile, Gonzalez, Paulo Assuncao, Raul Meireles (Ibson 86), Lopez, Helder Postiga (Bruno Moraes 81), Quaresma.
Arsenal: Lehmann - Eboue, Toure, Djourou, Clichy, Hleb, Ljungberg, Gilberto Silva, Fabregas, Flamini, Adebayor (Van Persie 79).

Dec 6
Hamburg 3 (Berisha 28, Van der Vaart 84, Sanogo 90)
CSKA Moscow 2 (Olic pen 23, Zhirkov 65)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 49,649. **Ref:** Farina (Ita)
Hamburg: Wachter - Mahdavikia, Reinhardt, Mathijsen, Atouba (Feilhaber 69), Jarolim (Sanogo 83), Laas, Trochowski, Van der Vaart, Ljuboja (Guerrero 75), Berisha. *Sent off: Atouba 69min (from the bench, after being substituted).*
CSKA: Akinfeev - V Berezutsky, Semberas, A Berezutsky, Krasic, Taranov (Odiah 77; Kochubey 86), Aldonin, Zhirkov, Dudu Cearense (Grigoryev 9), Olic, Daniel Carvalho.

GROUP G – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	6	3	2	1	7	3	11
Porto	6	3	2	1	9	4	11
CSKA Moscow	6	2	2	2	4	5	8
Hamburg	6	1	0	5	7	15	3

Sep 13 FC Porto-CSKA Moscow 0-0
Sep 13 Hamburg-Arsenal 1-2
Sep 26 Arsenal-FC Porto 2-0
Sep 26 CSKA Moscow-Hamburg 1-0
Oct 17 CSKA Moscow-Arsenal 1-0
Oct 17 FC Porto-Hamburg 4-1
Nov 1 Arsenal-CSKA Moscow 0-0
Nov 1 Hamburg-FC Porto 1-3
Nov 21 CSKA Moscow-FC Porto 0-2
Nov 21 Arsenal-Hamburg 3-1
Dec 6 FC Porto-Arsenal 0-0
Dec 6 Hamburg-CSKA Moscow 3-2

Group H

Nov 21
Lille (Fra) 2 (Odemwingie 28, Fauvergue 47)
Anderlecht (Blg) 2 (Mpenza 38, 48)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Lille: Sylva - Chalme, Plestan, Schmitz, Tafforeau, Keita, Makoun, Bodmer, M Robail (Debuchy 55), Fauvergue (Bastos 71), Odemwingie (Mirallas 75).
Anderlecht: Schollen - Vanden Borre, De Man, Van Damme, Deschacht, Pareja, Biglia (Juhasz 90), Hassan (Vanderhaeghe 83), Goor, Tchite, Mpenza (Boussoufa 66). *Sent off: Van Damme 88min.*

Nov 21
AEK Athens (Gre) 1 (Julio Cesar 32)
Milan (Ita) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)
AEK: Sorrentino - Cirillo, Dellas, Papastathopoulos, Tziortzioploulos (Moras 78), Emerson, Zikos, Manduca, Tozser (Kiriakidis 66), Limberopoulos, Julio Cesar (Hetemaj 86).
Milan: Dida (Kalac 78) - Brocchi, Costacurta (Jankulovski 46), Maldini, Bonera, Gourcuff, Pirlo, Seedorf, Kaka, Ricardo Oliveira (Borriello 70), Inzaghi.

Dec 6
Anderlecht 2 (Vanden Borre 38, Frutos 63)
AEK Athens 2 (Lakis 75, Cirillo 81)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Anderlecht: Zitka - Pareja, De Man, Juhasz, Deschacht, Vanden Borre, Biglia, Hassan (Boussoufa 65), Goor, Frutos (Legear 79), Tchite.
AEK: Sorrentino - Pautasso, Cirillo, Papastathopoulos, Georgeas, Kiriakidis (Lakis 50), Zikos, Manduca (Delibasic 58), Tozser, Limberopoulos, Julio Cesar (Hetemaj 58).

Dec 6
Milan 0
Lille 2 (Odemwingie 7, Keita 67)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 27,067. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Milan: Kalac - Bonera, Simic, Kaladze, Jankulovski, Brocchi (Seedorf 46), Pirlo, Ambrosini (Kaka 54), Gourcuff, Inzaghi, Borriello (Ricardo Oliveira 72).
Lille: Malicki - Chalme, Plestan, Tavlaridis, Tafforeau, Keita (Youla 83), Cabaye, Makoun, Debuchy, Bodmer (Fauvergue 89), Odemwingie (M Robail 73).

GROUP H – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	6	3	1	2	8	4	10
Lille	6	2	3	1	8	5	9
AEK	6	2	2	2	6	9	8
Anderlecht	6	0	4	2	7	11	4

Sep 13 Anderlecht-Lille 1-1
Sep 13 Milan-AEK Athens 3-0
Sep 26 AEK Athens-Anderlecht 1-1
Sep 26 Lille-Milan 0-0
Oct 17 Lille-AEK Athens 3-1
Oct 17 Anderlecht-Milan 0-1
Nov 1 AEK Athens-Lille 1-0
Nov 1 Milan-Anderlecht 4-1
Nov 21 Lille-Anderlecht 2-2
Nov 21 AEK Athens-Milan 1-0
Dec 6 Anderlecht-AEK Athens 2-2
Dec 6 Milan-Lille 0-2

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout round; third-placed sides enter UEFA Cup

UEFA CUP

Group A

Nov 23: Auxerre (Fra) 2 Rangers (Sco) 2; Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 1 Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 0.
Nov 29: Partizan Belgrade 1 Auxerre 4; Livorno (Ita) 1 Maccabi Haifa 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	3	2	1	0	7	4	7
Maccabi Haifa	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Auxerre	3	1	1	1	7	6	4
Livorno	3	0	2	1	4	5	2
Partizan	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

Group B

Nov 23: Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 0 Tottenham (Eng) 1; Club Brugge (Blg) 1 Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 1.
Nov 29: Dinamo Bucharest 2 Bayer Leverkusen 1; Besiktas (Tur) 2 Club Brugge 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tottenham	3	3	0	0	6	1	9
Dinamo Buc'st	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
Besiktas	3	1	0	2	3	5	3
Club Brugge	4	0	2	2	4	7	2
B Leverkusen	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

Group C

Nov 23: Slovan Liberec (Cze) 4 Grasshopper (Swi) 1; Sevilla (Spa) 2 Sporting Braga (Por) 0.
Nov 29: Grasshopper 0 Sevilla 4; AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 2 Slovan Liberec 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AZ	3	2	1	0	10	4	7
Sevilla	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
Slovan Liberec	4	1	2	1	6	7	5
Sporting Braga	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Grasshopper	3	0	0	3	3	13	0

Group D

Nov 23: Parma (Ita) 2 Heerenveen (Hol) 1; OB Odense (Den) 1 Lens (Fra) 1.
Nov 29: Lens 1 Parma 2; Osasuna (Spa) 3 OB Odense 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Parma	3	3	0	0	6	3	9
Lens	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Osasuna	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
OB	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Heerenveen	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

Group E

Nov 23: Basle (Swi) 2 Nancy (Fra) 2; Feyenoord (Hol) 0 Blackburn (Eng) 0.
Nov 30: Nancy 3 Feyenoord 0; Wisla Krakow (Pol) 3 Basle 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nancy	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Blackburn	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Wisla Krakow	3	1	0	2	5	5	3
Feyenoord	3	0	2	1	1	4	2
Basle	4	0	2	2	4	9	2

Group F

Nov 23: Sparta Prague (Cze) 0 Ajax (Hol) 0; Espanyol (Spa) 6 Zulte-Waregem (Blg) 2.
Nov 30: Ajax 0 Espanyol 2; Austria Wien (Aut) 0 Sparta Prague 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Espanyol	3	3	0	0	10	2	9
Zulte-Waregem	3	2	0	1	9	8	6
Ajax	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
Sparta Prague	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
Austria Wien	3	0	0	3	1	8	0

Group G

Nov 23: Rapid Bucharest (Rom) 1 Mlada Boleslav (Cze) 1; Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 2 Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 4.
Nov 30: Mlada Boleslav 0 Paris Saint-Germain 0; Panathinaikos (Gre) 0 Rapid Bucharest 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
H Tel Aviv	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Rapid Buc'st	4	0	4	0	3	3	4
Mlada Boleslav	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Paris SG	3	0	2	1	2	4	2

Group H

Nov 23: Newcastle (Eng) 2 Celta Vigo (Spa) 1; Fenerbahce (Tur) 3 Palermo (Ita) 0.
Nov 30: Celta Vigo 1 Fenerbahce 0; Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger) 0 Newcastle 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Newcastle	4	3	1	0	4	1	10
Celta Vigo	3

Saturday, November 18
FC Brussels 0
Lokeren 0 Att: 4,500

Cercle Brugge 3 (Dekelver 8, Boi 14, Pivaljevic 54)
Mons 0 Att: 3,900

Gent 2 (Olufade pen 45, Azofeifa 65)
Anderlecht 1 (Tchite 19) Att: 12,388

Lierse 2 (Jarju 23, Andic 56)
Germinal Beerschot 3 (Sterchele 70, Cruz 79, De Wilde 89) Att: 8,000

Roeselare 2 (Dufoor 33, Malki Sabah 68)
Beveren 1 (Dissa 90) Att: 5,000

Standard 1 (Areias Lopes 74)
St Truiden 2 (Van Houdt 76, 82) Att: 22,000

Zulte-Waregem 2 (Roussel 21, 33)
Westerlo 2 (Utaka 45, Ogunsoto 49) Att: 5,000

Sunday, November 19
Charleroi 1 (Chabaud pen 49)
Mouscron 0 Att: 9,289

Genk 0
Club Brugge 0 Att: 24,936

Friday, November 24
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Gonzalez 52)
Standard 3 (De Camargo 9, 60, Sa Pinto 75) Att: 11,000

Saturday, November 25
Beveren 2 (Dissa 34, Van Hoyweghen 83)
FC Brussels 2 (Kalulika 33, Stojanovic 72) Att: 3,000

Lokeren 0
Charleroi 0 Att: 4,881

Mons 0
Gent 1 (Pavlovic 21) Att: 3,500

Mouscron 2 (Custovic 24, Tomou Bayard 72)
Genk 2 (Vandenbergh 21, Mikulic 41) Att: 5,200

St Truiden 2 (Van Houdt 31, Simaeys 48)
Cercle Brugge 0 Att: 7,000

Westerlo 2 (Elejiko 65, Scheelen 68)
Lierse 0 Att: 7,000

Sunday, November 26
Anderlecht 3 (Boussoufa 10, Mpenza 29, Tchite 54)
Roeselare 2 (Dufoor 13, Annys 90) Att: 24,305

Club Brugge 4 (Balaban 34, 45, 50, 67)
Zulte-Waregem 1 (D'Haene 36) Att: 24,416

Friday, December 1
Beveren 1 (Dissa 90)
Anderlecht 1 (Boussoufa 6) Att: 10,000

Saturday, December 2
FC Brussels 0
Charleroi 2 (Chabaud 44, Dante 53) Att: 6,000

Cercle Brugge 1 (Serebrennikov 11)
Germinal Beerschot 2 (Sterchele 58, 83) Att: 4,250

Genk 1 (Soetaers 47)
Lokeren 0 Att: 21,000

Gent 3 (Olufade 1, 14, Foley 7)
St Truiden 1 (Peeters 48) Att: 7,900

Roeselare 2 (Vanderbiest 27, Malki Sabah 83)
Mons 1 (Milas 26) Att: 4,800

Standard 3 (Defour 1, Jovanovic 44, De Camargo 64)
Westerlo 0 Att: 26,500

Zulte-Waregem 0
Mouscron 0 Att: 5,000

Sunday, December 3
Lierse 1 (Jarju 34)
Club Brugge 2 (Englebert 25, Salou 29) Att: 8,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Genk	15	11	4	0	34	11	37
Anderlecht	15	9	4	2	28	16	31
Club Brugge	15	9	3	3	31	14	30
Standard	15	8	3	4	26	16	27
Gent	15	8	3	4	24	22	27
Charleroi	15	7	5	3	19	15	26
Westerlo	15	7	3	5	22	20	24
Germinal B	15	6	4	5	19	20	22
Roeselare	15	5	4	6	25	27	19
Mouscron	15	4	6	5	21	25	18
St Truiden	15	5	1	9	20	24	16
Beveren	15	4	4	7	14	22	16
FC Brussels	15	3	7	5	15	18	16
Lokeren	15	3	7	5	12	17	16
Zulte-Waregem	15	3	6	6	17	23	15
Cercle Brugge	15	4	2	9	13	18	14
Mons	15	3	4	8	12	20	13
Lierse	15	0	2	13	7	31	2

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Patrick Ogunsoto (Westerlo)
9 Bosko Balaban (Club Brugge)
9 Adnan Custovic (Mouscron)
9 Francois Sterchele (Germinal Beerschot)
9 Mohammed Tchite (Anderlecht)

BULGARIA

Nov 11: Beroe 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 2; Lovech 0 Cherno More 0; Rilski 1 Rodopa 0; Botev 5 Chernomorets 1; Spartak Varna 3 Belasitsa 3.
Nov 12: CSKA 2 Marek 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1 Levski 3; Slavia 3 Vihren 1.
Nov 18: Levski 3 Lokomotiv Sofia 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1 Lovech 1; Marek 2 Slavia 2; Rodopa 1 CSKA 2; Vihren 1 Botev 0; Belasitsa 4 Rilski 1; Cherno More 3 Spartak Varna 0; Chernomorets 0 Beroe 8.
Nov 25: Beroe 2 Vihren 0; Botev 3 Marek 0; Rilski 1 Cherno More 2; Slavia 4 Rodopa 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 7 Chernomorets 0; Spartak Varna 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1.
Nov 26: CSKA 2 Belasitsa 1; Lovech 0 Levski 0.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Levski	15	12	3	0	39	2	39
CSKA	15	12	1	2	36	7	37
Lok Sofia	15	10	3	2	31	13	33
Lovech	15	8	5	2	20	12	29
Cherno More	15	7	3	5	24	13	24
Slavia	15	6	5	4	24	19	23
Botev	15	7	1	7	24	24	22
Beroe	15	6	2	7	22	18	20
Vihren	15	6	2	7	15	17	20
Spartak Varna	15	6	1	8	15	30	19
Lok Plovdiv	15	5	3	7	18	19	18
Marek	15	4	4	7	20	30	16
Belasitsa	15	4	3	8	19	22	15
Rilski	15	5	0	10	15	29	15
Rodopa	15	3	1	11	14	26	10
Chernomorets*	15	0	1	14	4	59	-2

**3pts deducted for failing to register enough youth players*

CROATIA

Nov 11: Cibalia 3 Osijek 0; Rijeka 2 Slaven 0; Kamen Ingrad 1 Varteks 4; Pula 1 Sibenik 1.
Nov 12: Zagreb 3 Hajduk 0.
Nov 18: Slaven 1 Pula 0; Sibenik 3 Medimurje 0; Dinamo 4 Cibalia 0; Osijek 2 Kamen Ingrad 1; Varteks 1 Zagreb 3; Hajduk 3 Rijeka 0.
Nov 25: Hajduk 2 Slaven 0; Rijeka 2 Varteks 2; Zagreb 2 Osijek 0; Kamen Ingrad 0 Dinamo 2; Cibalia 0 Sibenik 1; Medimurje 1 Pula 0.
Dec 2: Slaven 1 Medimurje 0; Pula 0 Cibalia 0; Sibenik 4 Kamen Ingrad 1; Dinamo 2 Zagreb 1; Osijek 1 Rijeka 0; Varteks 0 Hajduk 1.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	17	14	2	1	43	12	44
Hajduk	18	14	2	2	32	10	44
Zagreb	18	10	1	7	27	19	31
Sibenik	18	9	3	6	29	22	30
Varteks	18	8	3	7	29	31	27
Medimurje	17	8	1	8	23	26	25
Rijeka	18	7	2	9	29	31	23
Slaven	18	7	2	9	19	23	23
Osijek	18	5	7	6	18	26	22
Pula	18	4	6	8	18	23	18
Cibalia	18	3	2	13	16	33	11
Kamen Ingrad	18	2	1	15	17	44	7

CZECH REPUBLIC

Nov 11: Zlin 1 Slavia 2; Sparta 1 Olomouc 0.
Nov 12: Ceske Budejovice 2 Ostrava 2; Kladno 3 Brno 0; Pribram 1 Slovacko 1; Teplice 3 Liberec 0; Jablonec 2 Plzen 1.
Nov 13: Mlada Boleslav 2 Most 1.
Nov 18: Ostrava 1 Teplice 1; Slovacko 1 Jablonec 1.
Nov 19: Brno 2 Pribram 0; Liberec 1 Mlada Boleslav 1; Most 1 Sparta 1; Plzen 1 Kladno 1; Olomouc 3 Zlin 0.
Nov 20: Slavia 2 Ceske Budejovice 0.
Nov 25: Zlin 3 Brno 0.
Nov 26: Ostrava 1 Liberec 1; Sparta 1 Plzen 0; Ceske Budejovice 2 Olomouc 0; Jablonec 3 Kladno 0; Mlada Boleslav 2 Slovacko 2; Pribram 0 Most 0.
Nov 27: Teplice 2 Slavia 4.
Dec 2: Slovacko 0 Zlin 0.
Dec 3: Liberec 2 Ceske Budejovice 0; Brno 2 Teplice 2; Most 3 Jablonec 1; Plzen 2 Pribram 0; Olomouc 3 Mlada Boleslav 1; Slavia 2 Ostrava 1.
Dec 4: Kladno 0 Sparta 2.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	17	10	6	1	20	6	36
Slavia	17	10	4	3	29	15	34
Liberec	17	9	6	2	24	9	33
Mlada Boleslav	17	9	3	5	26	20	30
Jablonec	17	6	7	4	21	18	25
Brno	17	6	7	4	15	16	25
C Budejovice	17	7	4	6	19	22	25
Teplice	17	6	6	5	30	24	24
Ostrava	17	5	6	6	23	23	21
Plzen	17	5	6	6	18	20	21
Most	17	4	7	6	21	24	19
Olomouc	17	5	3	9	17	23	18
Kladno	17	5	3	9	16	27	18
Zlin	17	3	5	9	11	21	14
Pribram	17	2	7	8	11	21	13
Slovacko	17	1	6	10	11	23	9

DENMARK

Nov 11: Brondby 3 Silkeborg 1.
Nov 12: Midtjylland 3 Viborg 1; Esbjerg 1 Vejle 0; Horsens 2 Randers 1; AaB 0 FC Copenhagen 1; OB 0 Nordsjaelland 1.
Nov 18: FC Copenhagen 2 Midtjylland 2.
Nov 19: Nordsjaelland 4 Horsens 0; Vejle 1 AaB 1; Randers 2 Brondby 0; Silkeborg 1 OB 3; Viborg 1 Esbjerg 1.
Nov 26: FC Copenhagen 2 Randers 1.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Copenhagen	18	13	4	1	35	12	43
Midtjylland	18	11	4	3	36	20	37
OB	18	10	5	3	24	15	35
AaB	18	9	4	5	23	17	31
Nordsjaelland	18	9	3	6	35	20	30
Esbjerg	18	7	5	6	31	29	26
Brondby	18	6	6	6	24	21	24
Randers	18	6	4	8	24	26	22
Viborg	18	5	3	10	18	35	18
Horsens	18	3	7	8	12	23	16
Vejle	18	2	3	13	19	42	9
Silkeborg	18	2	2	14	15	36	8

ENGLAND

Saturday, November 11
Blackburn 0
Manchester United 1 (Saha 64) Att: 26,162

Chelsea 4 (Drogba 27, 36, 69, Shevchenko 52)
Watford 0 Att: 41,936

Everton 0
Aston Villa 1 (Sutton 42) Att: 36,376

Manchester City 0
Newcastle 0 Att: 40,571

Middlesbrough 1 (Maccarone 74)
West Ham 0 Att: 25,898

Portsmouth 1 (Cole 74)
Fulham 1 (Knight 57) Att: 19,563

Sheffield United 2 (Hulse 70, Kazim-Richards 73)
Bolton 2 (Diouf 34, Davies 59) Att: 28,294

Wigan 3 (McCulloch 13, Camara 41, Jackson 78)
Charlton 2 (D Bent 52, M Bent 90) Att: 16,572

Sunday, November 12
Arsenal 3 (Flamini 41, Toure 56, Gallas 80)
Liverpool 0 Att: 60,110

Reading 3 (Shorey 38, Sidwell 45, Doyle 79)
Tottenham 1 (Keane pen 24) Att: 24,110

Saturday, November 18
Arsenal 1 (Henry 70)
Newcastle 1 (Dyer 30) Att: 60,058

Chelsea 1 (Geremi 22)
West Ham 0 Att: 41,916

Everton 1 (Arteta 60)
Bolton 0 Att: 34,417

Manchester City 3 (Corradi 12, 33, Barton 45)
Fulham 1 (John 62) Att: 35,776

Middlesbrough 0
Liverpool 0 Att: 31,424

Portsmouth 2 (Kanu 44, Lua Lua pen 89)
Watford 1 (Demerit 32) Att: 19,738

Reading 2 (Seol 18, Doyle 72)
Charlton 0 Att: 24,093

Sheffield United 1 (Gillespie 13)
Manchester United 2 (Rooney 30, 75) Att: 32,584

Sunday, November 19
Blackburn 1 (Tugay 23)
Tottenham 1 (Defoe pen 62) Att: 18,083

Wigan 0
Aston Villa 0 Att: 18,455

Saturday, November 25
Aston Villa 1 (Barry pen 45)
Middlesbrough 1 (Christie 43) Att: 33,162

Bolton 3 (Diagne-Faye 9, Anelka 45, 76)
Arsenal 1 (Gilberto Silva 45) Att: 24,409

Charlton 1 (Reid 68)
Everton 1 (Hreidarsson og 52) Att: 26,435

Fulham 0
Reading 1 (Doyle pen 17) Att: 22,673

Liverpool 1 (Gerrard 67)
Manchester City 0 Att: 44,081

West Ham 1 (Mullins 36)
Sheffield United 0 Att: 34,454

Sunday, November 26
Manchester United 1 (Saha 29)
Chelsea 1 (Ricardo Carvalho 69) Att: 75,948

Newcastle 1 (Sibierski 69)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 48,743

Tottenham 3 (Defoe 43, Berbatov 44, Lennon 90)
Wigan 1 (Camara 25) Att: 35,205

Tuesday, November 28
Watford 0
Sheffield United 1 (Webber 88) Att: 18,887

Wednesday, November 29
Aston Villa 1 (McCann 66)
Manchester City 3 (Vassell 18, Barton 32, Distin 75) Att: 30,124

Bolton 0
Chelsea 1 (Ballack 45) Att: 23,559

Fulham 2 (McBride 6, Radzinski 19)
Arsenal 1 (Van Persie 36) Att: 24,510

Liverpool 0
Portsmouth 0 Att: 42,467

Manchester United 3 (Cristiano Ronaldo 39, Evra 63, O'Shea 89)
Everton 0 Att: 75,723

Saturday, December 2
Arsenal 3 (Adebayor 20, Gilberto Silva pen 42, pen 72)
Tottenham 0 Att: 60,115

Blackburn 2 (Nonda 6, McCarthy 24)
Fulham 0 Att: 16,799

Middlesbrough 1 (Morrison 66)
Manchester United 2 (Saha pen 19, Fletcher 68) Att: 31,238

Portsmouth 2 (Taylor 52, pen 80)
Aston Villa 2 (Barry pen 37, Angel 82) Att: 20,042

Reading 1 (Doyle 33)
Bolton 0 Att: 23,556

Sheffield United 2 (Morgan 64, Gillespie 88)
Charlton 1 (Reid 17) Att: 27,368

Wigan 0
Liverpool 4 (Bellamy 9, 26, Kuijt 40, McCulloch og 45) Att: 22,089

Sunday, December 3
Everton 2 (Osman 52, Vaughan 90)
West Ham 0 Att: 32,968

Monday, December 4
Manchester City 0
Watford 0 Att: 35,915

Tuesday, December 5
Charlton 1 (El Karkouri 90)
Blackburn 0 Att: 23,423

Tottenham 2 (Berbatov 48, Keane 84)
Middlesbrough 1 (Huth 80) Att: 34,154

Wednesday, December 6
Newcastle 3 (Sibierski 23, Martins pen 57, Emre 84)
Reading 2 (Harper 37, 42) Att: 48,182

West Ham 0
Wigan 2 (Cotterill 51, Spector og 58) Att: 33,805

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	16	13	2	1	35	8	41
Chelsea	15	11	2	2	25	8	35
Arsenal	15	7	4	4	25	12	25
Portsmouth	16	7	4	5	21	14	25
Liverpool	16	7	4	5	19	15	25
Reading	16	8	1	7	19	21	25
Everton	16	6	6	4	20	15	24
Aston Villa	16	5	9	2	19	15	24
Bolton	16	7	3	6	15	15	24
Tottenham	16	6	4	6	15	20	22
Wigan	15	6	3	6	19	20	21
Man City	16	5	5	6	13	17	20
Fulham	16	5	5	6	16	23	20
Blackburn	15	4	4	7	13	18	16
Newcastle	15	4	4	7	12	17	16
Middlesbrough	16	4	4	8	13	21	16
Sheffield Utd	16	4	4	8	11	20	16
West Ham	16	4	2	10	10	20	14
Charlton	16	3	3	10	12	23	12
Watford	15	1	7	7	10	20	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS
8 Kevin Doyle (Reading)
8 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
8 Nwankwo Kanu (Portsmouth)
7 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)
7 Louis Saha (Manchester United)

FRANCE

Friday, November 10
Lyon 2 (Cris 85, Squillaci 86)
Valenciennes 1 (Savidan 75) Att: 39,833

Saturday, November 11
Bordeaux 0
Auxerre 0 Att: 22,025

Le Mans 1 (Lucau 37)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Kalou pen 11) Att: 12,983

Lens 0
Rennes 0 Att: 32,214

Lorient 2 (Le Pen 67, Namouchi 89)
Nancy 0 Att: 12,233

Nantes 2 (Cubillier 39, Boukhari 87)
Saint-Etienne 2 (Feindouno 45, Hognon 90) Att: 32,404

Nice 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 10,688

Toulouse 3 (Pujol og 45, Elmander 50, 71)
Sedan 1 (Boutabout 66) Att: 14,461

Sunday, November 12
Lille 1 (Bodmer 45)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 17,351

Troyes 0
Monaco 4 (Gakpe 21, Meriem pen 73, Toure 85, Di Vaio 90) Att: 11,436

Saturday, November 18
Lens 2 (Coulibaly 1, S Keita 83)
Nantes 0 Att: 33,128

Monaco 2 (Toure 8, Menez 49)
Lorient 2 (Namouchi 23, Le Pen 46) Att: 9,820

Nancy 1 (Puygrenier 75)
Troyes 0 Att: 17,168

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Bordeaux 2 (Wendel 28, Laslandes 87) Att: 38,394

Rennes 1 (Marveaux 88)
Le Mans 1 (Sessegnon 45) Att: 24,373

Saint-Etienne 2 (Piquionne 20, Feindouno 28)
Nice 1 (Rool 45) Att: 26,707

Sedan 0
Lyon 1 (Abdou og 79) Att: 21,025

Sochaux 0
Lille 0 Att: 12,397

Sunday, November 19
Auxerre 1 (Pieroni 48)
Toulouse 0 Att: 6,547

Marseille 1 (Pagis 61)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 46,484

Saturday, November 25
Bordeaux 1 (Alonso 70)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 29,702

Lille 1 (Bodmer 77)
Monaco 1 (Gakpe 37) Att: 13,193

Lorient 1 (Marchal 2)
Sochaux 3 (Le Tallec 22, 24, Ziani pen 45) Att: 12,513

Nice 2 (Kone 55, Kante 76)
Sedan 2 (Job 17, Pujol 86) Att: 9,028

Toulouse 1 (Bergougnoux pen 66)
Rennes 0 Att: 15,647

Troyes 1 (Lachuer 18)
Marseille 1 (Maoulida 61) Att: 18,579

Sunday, November 26
Le Mans 1 (Bangoura 12)
Lens 1 (Thomert 42) Att: 9,217

Lyon 1 (Malouda 25)
Auxerre 0 Att: 39,576

Nantes 1 (Da Rocha 76)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Kalou 2) Att: 32,104

Valenciennes 1 (Savidan 1)
Nancy 0 Att: 13,241

Saturday, December 2
Auxerre 0
Nice 0 Att: 6,252

Le Mans 0
Lyon 1 (Wiltord 57) Att: 15,106

Lens 3 (Hilton 40, Cousin 59, Jemaa 88)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 30,279

Monaco 3 (Toure 37, Gakpe 46, Koller 64)
Valenciennes 0 Att: 12,277

Rennes 2 (Melchiot 39, Cheyrou 80)
Nantes 0 Att: 29,093

Saint-Etienne 2 (Heinz 51, Piquionne 67)
Lorient 0 Att: 24,892

Sedan 1 (Pujol 72)
Troyes 2 (Ba 39, Danic 70) Att: 14,291

Sunday, December 3
Nancy 1 (Gavanon 52)
Lille 3 (Bodmer 63, Debuchy 69, Youla 90) Att: 19,589

Sochaux 1 (Afolabi 77)
Marseille 0 Att: 19,990

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	16	14	1	1	32	10	43
Lens	16	8	5	3	25	15	29
Lille	16	8	5	3	24	14	29
Sochaux	16	8	5	3	21	16	29
Saint-Etienne	16	8	3	5	25	19	27
Nancy	16	7	4	5	14	13	25
Bordeaux	16	8	1	7	19	20	25
Marseille	16	7	3	6	21	15	24
Toulouse	15	7	3	5	20	18	24
Rennes	16	5	5	6	13	14	20
Le Mans	16	4	8	4	19	21	20
Lorient	16	5	5	6	16	20	20
Auxerre	16	4	6	6	14	19	18
Paris SG	15	4	5	6	16	20	17
Valenciennes	16	5	2	9	14	24	17
Monaco	16	4	4	8	19	19	16
Nice	16	3	5	8	14	19	14
Troyes	16	3	5	8	15	23	14
Nantes	16	2	6	8	12	23	12
Sedan	16	1	7	8	19	30	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS
8 Ismael Bangoura (Le Mans)
7 Mathieu Bodmer (Lille)
7 Aruna Dindane (Lens)

GERMANY

Friday, November 10
Werder Bremen 1 (Klose 29)
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Frei 7, Tinga 53, Kruska pen 85) Att: 42,100

Saturday, November 11
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Kiessling 48, Athirson 80)
Bayern Munich 3 (Salihamidzic 33, Demichelis 83, Pizarro 86) Att: 22,500

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Arminia Bielefeld 3 (Wichniarek 26, Zuma 62, Ndjeng 84) Att: 35,500

Hamburg 1 (Ljuboja 65)
Monchengladbach 1 (Neuville 84) Att: 56,587

Hertha 3 (Pantelic 9, Van Burik 58, Neuendorf 80)
Bochum 3 (Gekas 39, Misimovic 45, 47) Att: 29,104

Schalke 4 (Kuranyi 13, 32, Halil Altintop 21, 67)
Mainz 0 Att: 61,482

Wolfsburg 0
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 18,641

Sunday, November 12
Alemannia Aachen 1 (Plasshenrich 90)
Nurnberg 1 (Galasek 29) Att: 20,800

Hannover 1 (Rosenthal 13)
Stuttgart 2 (Hitzlsperger 49, Cacau 54) Att: 28,847

Friday, November 17
Bochum 4 (Misimovic 29, Maltritz 33, Butscher 36, Gekas 47)
Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Streit 2, 6, Amanatidis 58) Att: 21,260

Saturday, November 18
Alemannia Aachen 2 (Rosler 33, Schlaudraff 68)
Werder Bremen 2 (Mertesacker 47, Klose 79) Att: 20,800

Bayern Munich 2 (Makaay 27, Pizarro 36)
Stuttgart 1 (Gomez 7) Att: 69,000

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Frei pen 21)
Hertha 2 (Schmidt 10, Gilberto 15) Att: 70,200

Energie Cottbus 2 (Radu 28, 31)
Schalke 4 (Hamit Altintop 4, Kuranyi 15, Pander 52, Kobiashvili 84) Att: 17,210

Mainz 0
Hamburg 0 Att: 20,300

Nurnberg 3 (Vittek 12, Schroth 48, Saenko 85)
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Madouni 7, 69) Att: 37,143

Sunday, November 19
Arminia Bielefeld 0
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 22,651

Monchengladbach 0
Hannover 1 (Balitsch 50) Att: 39,670

Friday, November 24
Schalke 2 (Rafinha 19, Lovenkrands 27)
Bochum 1 (Gekas 49) Att: 61,482

Saturday, November 25
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Kyrgiakos 38)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Smolarek 79) Att: 51,500

Hamburg 1 (Van der Vaart pen 17)
Bayern Munich 2 (Makaay 57, Pizarro 78) Att: 57,000

Hannover 1 (Hashemian 75)
Mainz 0 Att: 29,108

Hertha 2 (Pantelic 41, Dejagah 62)
Alemannia Aachen 1 (Lehmann 45) Att: 40,879

Werder Bremen 3 (Klose 29, 45, Hunt 75)
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 40,792

Wolfsburg 1 (Menseguez 74)
Nurnberg 1 (Saenko 7) Att: 16,397

Sunday, November 26
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Barbarez 19, Rolfes 66, Voronin 80)
Energie Cottbus 1 (Munteanu 51) Att: 22,500

Stuttgart 1 (Cacau 6)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 53,000

Friday, December 1
Mainz 0
Stuttgart 0 Att: 20,300

Saturday, December 2
Arminia Bielefeld 0
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 20,459

Bayern Munich 1 (Demichelis 23)
Monchengladbach 1 (Delura 33) Att: 69,000

Bochum 2 (Dabrowski 5, Misimovic 70)
Hamburg 1 (Ljuboja 42) Att: 25,715

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Smolarek 90)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 62,900

Energie Cottbus 0
Hannover 1 (Cherundolo 22) Att: 11,345

Werder Bremen 3 (Diego pen 23, Klose 32, 40)
Hertha 1 (Simunic 25) Att: 40,168

Sunday, December 3
Alemannia Aachen 2 (Schlaudraff 32, Fiel 81)
Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Takahara 14, 43, 62) Att: 20,800

Nurnberg 0
Schalke 0 Att: 43,242

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Werder Bremen	15	9	3	3	39	19	30
Schalke	15	9	3	3	25	16	30
Stuttgart	15	8	4	3	27	19	28
Bayern Munich	15	8	3	4	24	18	27
Hertha	15	6	6	3	26	22	24
B Dortmund	15	5	7	3	19	16	22
A Bielefeld	15	5	6	4	22	17	21
E Frankfurt	15	4	8	3	20	21	20
Nurnberg	15	3	10	2	18	15	19
B Leverkusen	15	5	4	6	24	22	19
Wolfsburg	15	4	7	4	10	12	19
Hannover	15	5	4	6	14	22	19
E Cottbus	15	4	4	7	17	22	16
Alemannia	15	4	3	8	23	29	15
Bochum	15	4	3	8	20	29	15
M'gladbach	15	4	2	9	12	20	14
Hamburg	15	1	8	6	13	19	11
Mainz	15	1	7	7	10	25	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Miroslav Klose (Werder Bremen)
9 Marko Pantelic (Hertha)
8 Mario Gomez (Stuttgart)
8 Roy Makaay (Bayern Munich)
7 Diego (Werder Bremen)

GREECE

Nov 11: Aigaleo 0 PAOK 2; Iraklis 0 Aris 0.
Nov 12: Ionikos 1 Panionios 1; Kerkira 1 OFI 0; Ergotelis 0 Panathinaikos 1; Xanthi 1 Atromitos 0; Olympiakos 5 Apollon 0; AEK 5 Larisa 0.
Nov 18: AEK 4 Kerkira 1; Aris 2 Olympiakos 3.
Nov 19: Atromitos 0 Panathinaikos 4; Apollon 0 Ergotelis 0; Larisa 0 Iraklis 1; OFI 1 Aigaleo 0; Panionios 0 Xanthi 2; PAOK 3 Ionikos 0.
Nov 25: Aigaleo 1 AEK 2; Ergotelis 0 Aris 1.
Nov 26: Ionikos 0 OFI 2; Iraklis 1 Kerkira 0; Olympiakos 4 Larisa 0; Panathinaikos 3 Apollon 2; Panionios 0 Atromitos 0; Xanthi 1 PAOK 0.
Dec 2: AEK 2 Ionikos 0; Kerkira 0 Olympiakos 2.
Dec 3: Aris 1 Panathinaikos 0; Atromitos 1 Apollon 1; Iraklis 2 Aigaleo 1; Larisa 2 Ergotelis 1; OFI 0 Xanthi 2; PAOK 1 Panionios 1.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	13	11	0	2	26	6	33
AEK	13	9	3	1	27	8	30
Panathinaikos	13	9	1	3	22	12	28
PAOK	13	6	4	3	15	9	22
Xanthi	13	5	3	5	11	9	18
OFI	13	4	5	4	14	15	17
Aris	13	3	7	3	11	12	16
Aigaleo	13	4	4	5	11	15	16
Larisa	13	4	4	5	12	20	16
Atromitos	13	3	6	4	14	16	15
Kerkira	13	4	3	6	9	13	15
Panionios	13	2	7	4	9	14	13
Ergotelis	13	3	3	7	10	14	12
Iraklis	13	3	3	7	11	18	12
Apollon	13	2	5	6	10	17	11
Ionikos	13	2	2	9	7	21	8

HOLLAND

Friday, November 10
NAC 1 (De Graaf 81)
Heerenveen 1 (Afonso Alves 5) Att: 14,450

Saturday, November 11
AZ 5 (Schaars 2, De Zeeuw 23, Arveladze 81, 89, Koevermans 90)
Heracles 0 Att: 15,485

Excelsior 1 (Dijkhuizen pen 90)
NEC 1 (Snoyl 90) Att: 2,915

Roda JC 1 (Ramzi 19)
RKC 1 (Van den Bergh 58) Att: 15,000

Sunday, November 12
Ajax 0
PSV 1 (Simons 63) Att: 50,496

Sparta 2 (Rose 40, Schenkel 90)
Den Haag 1 (Delorge 79) Att: 9,720

Twente 7 (N'Kufo pen 16, 71, Bakircioglu 45, 52, Wilkshire 85, Zijler 89, 90)
Groningen 1 (Lovre 22) Att: 13,225

Vitesse 4 (Esajas 7, Kaya 26, Sansoni 50, Lazovic pen 89)
Utrecht 2 (Kopteff 71, Nelisse 76) Att: 17,850

Willem II 3 (Baelum 56, Redan 60, Hadouir pen 78)
Feyenoord 5 (Huysegems 10, Buijs 33, 74, Kolkka 54, 61) Att: 12,750

Friday, November 17
Heracles 2 (Everton 14, Tanghe 89)
NAC 0 Att: 8,000

Saturday, November 18
Feyenoord 3 (Hofs 29, 81, Derijck 57)
AZ 2 (De Zeeuw 32, Koevermans 72) Att: 45,000

NEC 1 (Denneboom 77)
Sparta 2 (Vlug 34, Rose 58) Att: 12,000

PSV 4 (Kone 29, Alex 44, Farfan 80, Salcido 85)
Excelsior 0 Att: 33,120

RKC 0
Heerenveen 2 (Nilsson 13, Afonso Alves 20) Att: 5,000

Sunday, November 19
Ajax 1 (Sneijder 48)
Twente 1 (Engelaar 8) Att: 49,364

***Den Haag 0**
Vitesse 3 (Lazovic pen 21, Pryor 46, Esajas 66) Att: 7,000
**Match abandoned in 66th minute following pitch invasion by home fans; result stood*

Groningen 4 (Nevland 38, 56, Levchenko pen 85, Salmon 90)
Willem II 1 (Hadouir 67) Att: 18,967

Utrecht 2 (Kruys 25, Van Dijk pen 69)
Roda JC 0 Att: 17,250

Friday, November 24
Twente 2 (Bakircioglu 34, N'Kufo 89)
Vitesse 0 Att: 13,250

Saturday, November 25
Excelsior 6 (Slory 31, Van Nieuwstadt 45, Bruins pen 54, 69, Steur 58, Grot 78)
Heracles 1 (Everton 15) Att: 3,328

PSV 5 (Nelisse og 9, Afellay 28, Farfan 39, 76, Kone 54)
Utrecht 0 Att: 33,114

Willem II 3 (Bobson 5, 29, Van der Struijk 90)
RKC 1 (Van de Haar 68) Att: 13,100

Sunday, November 26
Groningen 2 (Lovre 13, Nevland 28)
Den Haag 5 (Bunjevcevic 3, Knopper 26, Delorge 50, Kolk 70, 86) Att: 18,747

Heerenveen 1 (Afonso Alves 20)
AZ 3 (Arveladze 27, Koevermans 81, Martens 85) Att: 25,600

NEC 4 (Holman 54, Eagles 80, Kivuvu 83, Niedzielan 86)
Feyenoord 1 (Pothuizen og 90) Att: 12,000

Roda JC 3 (Oper 53, De Fauw 63, Ramzi 81)
NAC 2 (De Graaf 40, Zonneveld 86) Att: 13,000

Sparta 3 (Rose 35, Polak pen 60, Medunjanin 84)
Ajax 0 Att: 10,800

Wednesday, November 29
Vitesse 1 (Benson 24)
Heerenveen 3 (Afonso Alves 55, 60, pen 77) Att: 17,600

Friday, December 1
RKC 2 (Ikedia 26, Mulder 86)
Sparta 1 (Vlug 38) Att: 7,200

Saturday, December 2
Den Haag 0
NEC 2 (Niedzielan 45, Snoyl 66) Att: 6,738

Heracles 1 (Everton 70)
Roda JC 1 (Saeijs 29) Att: 8,630

NAC 0
Twente 0 Att: 14,125

Vitesse 0
PSV 1 (Mendez 22) Att: 18,900

Sunday, December 3
Ajax 6 (Grygera 4, Emanuelson 9, Mitea 19, Huntelaar 22, 45, De Mul 78)
Willem II 0 Att: 46,695

AZ 5 (Arveladze 10, 56, Koevermans 26, 42, Gyan og 76)
Excelsior 0 Att: 15,101

Feyenoord 4 (Huysegems 44, 51, Lucius pen 64, De Guzman 84)
Heerenveen 3 (Afonso Alves 24, Friend 74, 79) Att: 38,000

Utrecht 3 (Keller 4, Van der Gun 35, 52)
Groningen 0 Att: 20,000

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	15	13	1	1	41	6	40
AZ	15	11	2	2	48	14	35
Ajax	15	11	1	3	36	12	34
Twente	15	8	5	2	32	16	29
Feyenoord	15	9	2	4	30	29	29
Groningen	15	7	3	5	27	31	24
Heerenveen	15	7	2	6	28	20	23
Roda JC	15	6	4	5	17	19	22
Utrecht	15	6	2	7	23	26	20
NEC	15	5	3	7	16	21	18
Vitesse	15	5	1	9	22	25	16
Excelsior	15	4	4	7	23	29	16
NAC	15	4	4	7	13	25	16
Heracles	15	4	3	8	13	28	15
Sparta	15	4	1	10	15	31	13
Willem II	15	4	1	10	16	36	13
RKC	15	2	5	8	13	32	11
Den Haag	15	2	2	11	15	28	8

LEADING GOALSCORERS
15 Afonso Alves (Heerenveen)
12 Danny Koevermans (AZ)
11 Jefferson Farfan (PSV)
10 Blaise N'Kufo (Twente)

HUNGARY

Nov 10: Ujpest 2 Tatabanya 0.
Nov 11: Diosgyor 0 MTK 1; Sopron 1 Kaposvar 0; Pecs 2 Vasas 1; Gyor 2 Fehervar 0; Rakospalota 1 Debrecen 3; Zalaegerszeg 1 Vac 1.
Nov 13: Honved 0 Paks 0.
Nov 17: Fehervar 3 Ujpest 2; Vasas 0 Paks 1.
Nov 18: Vac 1 Sopron 2; Tatabanya 2 Rakospalota 3; Kaposvar 1 Pecs 2; Diosgyor 2 Honved 1; Debrecen 3 Zalaegerszeg 1.
Nov 20: MTK 1 Gyor 0.
Nov 24: Ujpest 2 MTK 3.
Nov 25: Diosgyor 4 Gyor 3; Zalaegerszeg 1 Tatabanya 0; Sopron 1 Debrecen 6; Rakospalota 2 Fehervar 0; Pecs 1 Vac 1; Paks 1 Kaposvar 0.
Nov 27: Honved 0 Vasas 1.
Dec 1: Zalaegerszeg 2 Fehervar 1.
Dec 2: Paks 0 Vac 0; Sopron 1 Tatabanya 0; Rakospalota 0 MTK 0; Vasas 1 Kaposvar 0; Honved 4 Gyor 1; Pecs 0 Debrecen 2.
Dec 4: Ujpest 0 Diosgyor 3.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	16	12	2	2	32	12	38
Zalaegerszeg	16	11	2	3	29	18	35
Debrecen	16	10	3	3	32	13	33
Ujpest	16	8	2	6	20	15	26
Fehervar	16	8	1	7	21	19	25
Diosgyor	16	8	1	7	23	22	25
Vasas	16	7	2	7	15	21	23
Paks	16	6	4	6	16	16	22
Pecs	16	5	6	5	19	21	21
Sopron	16	6	2	8	14	26	20
Gyor	16	5	5	6	22	22	20
Tatabanya	16	5	2	9	24	29	17
Honved	16	4	4	8	21	24	16
Rakospalota	16	4	4	8	21	32	16
Kaposvar	16	4	2	10	15	23	14
Vac	16	1	6	9	12	23	9

ITALY

Saturday, November 11
Fiorentina 3 (Mutu 26, Pazzini 89, 90)
Atalanta 1 (Migliacco 25) Att: 30,337

Milan 1 (Brocchi 56)
Roma 2 (Totti 7, 83) Att: 55,322

Sunday, November 12
Ascoli 0
Empoli 1 (Busce 7) Att: 5,736

Catania 3 (Spinesi 35, Caserta 61, Corona 90)
Livorno 2 (Bakayoko 45, Paulinho 60) Att: 17,976

Lazio 5 (Rocchi 33, 82, Mauri 41, 74, Oddo 78)
Udinese 0 Att: 21,356

Messina 2 (Cordova 35, Rigano 64)
Cagliari 2 (Esposito 53, Conti 90) Att: 11,417

Palermo 3 (Corini 43, Di Michele 69, Amauri 79)
Torino 0 Att: 26,642

Parma 1 (Budan 26)
Inter 2 (Ibrahimovic 15, Cruz 90) Att: 20,488

Sampdoria 3 (Bonazzoli 19, Quagliarella 28, 36)
Chievo 0 Att: 17,415

Siena 0
Reggina 1 (Bianchi pen 70) Att: 6,219

Saturday, November 18
Cagliari 1 (Pepe 90)
Palermo 0 Att: 15,756

Empoli 0
Milan 0 Att: 7,317

Sunday, November 19
Ascoli 1 (Bjelanovic 86)
Fiorentina 1 (Toni 45) Att: 8,523

Chievo 2 (Zanchetta 25, Pellissier 59)
Atalanta 2 (Zampagna 73, Loria 77) Att: 7,090

Inter 1 (Crespo 4)
Reggina 0 Att: 43,772

Livorno 3 (Pfertzel 26, Ferronetti og 73, Lucarelli 84)
Parma 0 Att: 7,445

Messina 1 (Rigano pen 58)
Lazio 4 (Mauri 10, 83, Pandev 60, Makinwa 84) Att: 15,534

Roma 7 (Panucci 12, 48, Mancini 19, Perrotta 24, 40, Montella 60, Totti 75)
Catania 0 Att: 46,503

Torino 1 (Rosina pen 80)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 20,565

Udinese 3 (Gyan 19, Iaquinta pen 43, 81)
Siena 0 Att: 18,754

Saturday, November 25
Chievo 2 (Obinna 30, pen 71)
Udinese 0 Att: 5,335

Milan 1 (Maldini 13)
Messina 0 Att: 42,515

Sunday, November 26
Atalanta 0
Torino 2 (Lazetic 78, Rosina 86) Att: 12,580

Catania 2 (Spinesi pen 67, Caserta 84)
Parma 0 Att: 27,943

Empoli 1 (Vannucchi 9)
Cagliari 0 Att: 4,194

Lazio 3 (Belleri 9, Pandev 25, Foggia 84)
Ascoli 1 (Mauri og 16) Att: 12,699

Palermo 1 (Amauri 45)
Inter 2 (Ibrahimovic 7, Vieira 61) Att: 34,095

Reggina 2 (Bianchi 63, Leon 77)
Livorno 2 (Galante 22, Lucarelli 27) Att: 9,871

Sampdoria 2 (Volpi 14, Flachi pen 90)
Roma 4 (Totti 13, 74, Perrotta 33, Panucci 44) Att: 22,929

Siena 1 (Antonini 17)
Fiorentina 1 (Mutu 38) Att: 13,744

Saturday, December 2
Inter 2 (Burdisso 11, Crespo 54)
Siena 0 Att: 42,299

Roma 2 (Totti pen 50, pen 64)
Atalanta 1 (Zampagna 19) Att: 33,755

Sunday, December 3
Ascoli 2 (Bjelanovic 12, 39)
Catania 2 (Stovini 53, Spinesi 80) Att: 7,196

Cagliari 2 (Suazo 53, Capone 65)
Milan 2 (Gilardino 48, Borriello 70) Att: 18,275

Fiorentina 1 (Toni 15)
Lazio 0 Att: 30,178

Livorno 0
Chievo 2 (Obinna 71, 78) Att: 7,087

Messina 0
Sampdoria 2 (Franceschini 20, Quagliarella 90) Att: 10,180

Parma 0
Palermo 0 Att: 14,173

Torino 1 (Comotto 88)
Empoli 0 Att: 22,662

Udinese 1 (Iaquinta 69)
Reggina 1 (Bianchi 35) Att: 14,454

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	14	11	3	0	29	14	36
Roma	14	10	2	2	32	11	32
Palermo	14	9	1	4	27	18	28
Livorno	14	5	5	4	15	15	20
Catania	14	5	5	4	20	26	20
Empoli	14	4	7	3	12	10	19
Lazio*	14	6	3	5	22	13	18
Atalanta	14	4	5	5	21	22	17
Udinese	14	4	5	5	14	15	17
Siena*	14	4	6	4	13	16	17
Torino	14	4	5	5	10	17	17
Sampdoria	14	4	4	6	21	21	16
Cagliari	14	2	9	3	13	14	15
Messina	14	3	5	6	16	22	14
Milan*	14	5	5	4	14	14	12
Chievo	14	2	4	8	13	19	10
Parma	14	2	3	9	12	27	9
Fiorentina*	14	7	2	5	21	15	8
Ascoli	14	0	6	8	9	21	6
Reggina*	14	4	5	5	15	19	2

**Milan had 8pts deducted, Lazio 3pts, Reggina 15pts and Fiorentina 15pts for their part in the country's match-fixing scandal. Siena had 1pt deducted for late payment of taxes*

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Christian Rigano (Messina)
9 Francesco Totti (Roma)
8 Rolando Bianchi (Reggina)
7 Amauri (Palermo)
7 Vincenzo Iaquinta (Udinese)
7 Gionatha Spinesi (Catania)

KAZAKHSTAN

KAZAKHSTAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Astana	30	19	7	4	45	23	64
Aktobe	30	18	6	6	48	21	60
Tobil	30	16	8	6	43	22	56
Shakhtyor	30	15	5	10	35	24	50
FK Almaty	30	13	9	8	36	29	48
Yertis	30	13	8	9	34	24	47
Kairat	30	12	10	8	39	30	46
Ekibastuzetc	30	12	6	12	29	28	42
Vostok	30	9	8	13	33	40	35
Taraz	30	9	6	15	32	34	33
Ordabasi	30	8	9	13	29	33	33
Okjetpes	30	8	9	13	23	36	33
Yesil	30	8	9	13	20	37	33
Atirau	30	8	5	17	25	47	29
Kaisar	30	8	4	18	29	53	28
Energetik	30	5	9	16	25	44	24

Relegated: Kaisar, Energetik
Promoted: Avangard Petropavl, Zhetysu
Taldikorghan

LITHUANIA

LITHUANIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FBK Kaunas	36	28	4	4	85	30	88
Ekranas	36	20	7	9	63	39	67
Vetra	36	17	10	9	49	35	61
Zalgiris	36	14	12	10	52	39	54
Suduva	36	15	8	13	48	44	53
Atlantas	36	14	10	12	46	41	52
FK Vilnius	36	11	14	11	46	40	47
Siauliai	36	10	11	15	42	46	41
Silute	36	5	3	28	25	77	18
Nevezis	36	4	5	27	35	100	17

Relegated: Silute (after play-off), Nevezis
Promoted: Alytis Alytus, Interas Visaginas (after play-off)

POLAND

Nov 10: Lech 1 Arka 1; Legia 2 Odra 0; Pogon 1 Groclin 1; Widzew 0 Zaglebie 2; Wisla P 1 Gornik Z 3; Gornik L 1 Cracovia 0.
Nov 11: Korona 1 LKS 0; Wisla K 2 Belchatow 4.
Nov 17: Korona 4 Gornik Z 2.
Nov 18: Odra 0 Lech 0; Zaglebie 1 Legia 0; Cracovia 2 Widzew 1; Groclin 1 Gornik L 1; Belchatow 1 Pogon 0; Arka 4 Wisla P 1.
Nov 19: LKS 2 Wisla K 1.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belchatow	15	9	3	3	31	17	30
Legia	15	8	3	4	29	16	27
Korona	15	8	3	4	24	15	27
Zaglebie	15	7	6	2	20	15	27
Wisla K	15	6	7	2	26	13	25
LKS	15	6	6	3	19	15	24
Lech	15	5	6	4	29	21	21
Cracovia	15	6	3	6	20	25	21
Groclin	15	3	10	2	17	15	19
Arka	15	3	9	3	18	16	18
Widzew	15	4	3	8	16	21	15
Gornik Z	15	4	3	8	18	24	15
Pogon	15	3	5	7	14	19	14
Gornik L	15	3	5	7	9	26	14
Odra	15	2	6	7	13	26	12
Wisla P	15	1	6	8	11	30	9

PORTUGAL

Friday, November 17
Beira Mar 1 (Ratinho 72)
Setubal 1 (Varela 84)

Saturday, November 18
FC Porto 2 (Helder Postiga 50, Pepe 83)
Academica 1 (Nestor Alvarez 76)

Sporting Braga 3 (Jose Carlos 8, Maciel 41, Paulo Jorge 82)
Benfica 1 (Ricardo Rocha 31)

Sunday, November 19
Aves 3 (Artur Futre 43, 62, Vitor Manuel 85)
Nacional 1 (Filipe Anunciacao og 26)

Maritimo 0
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Tello 63)

Pacos Ferreira 1 (Edson 44)
Naval 1 (Saulo 68)

Uniao Leiria 0
Boavista 0

Monday, November 20
Estrela Amadora 1 (Jaime Junior 31)
Belenenses 0

Friday, November 24
Boavista 1 (Ricardo Sousa 61)
Estrela Amadora 1 (Jaime Junior 11)

Saturday, November 25
Benfica 2 (Von Schwegler og 31, Katsouranis 65)
Maritimo 1 (Marcinho 42)

Sunday, November 26
Academica 3 (Litos 44, Dame 47, Gyano 58)
Beira Mar 1 (Jorge Leitao 33)

Belenenses 0
FC Porto 1 (Helder Postiga 41)

Nacional 2 (Alonso 40, Bruno 73)
Uniao Leiria 1 (Sougou 70)

ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES TEAM OF THE MONTH NOVEMBER 2006

La Gazzetta dello Sport · don balon · kicker SPORTMAGAZIN · SPORT-EXPRESS · FOOT MAGAZINE · WORLD SOCCER · A BOLA · voetbal INTERNATIONAL · FANATIK

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (Por)
Helton (Porto); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea), Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Lahm (Bayern Munich); Quaresma (Porto), Kaka (Milan), Juninho (Lyon), Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd); Crespo (Inter), Pizarro (Bayern Munich)

DON BALON (Spa)
Gomes (PSV); Panucci (Roma), Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Krstajic (Schalke); Iniesta (Barcelona), Afonso Alves (Heerenveen), Totti (Roma), Ronaldinho (Barcelona); Kanoute (Sevilla), Drogba (Chelsea), Klose (Werder Bremen)

FANATIK (Tur)
Van der Sar (Man Utd); Cordoba (Inter), Bordon (Schalke), Mertesacker (Werder Bremen); Diarra (Real Madrid), Gerrard (Liverpool), Malouda (Lyon), De Rossi (Roma); Rooney (Man Utd), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)

FOOT (Blg)
Amelia (Livorno); Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Alex (PSV), Vidic (Man Utd), Van Buyten (Bayern Munich); Stankovic (Inter), Vieira (Inter), Malouda (Lyon); Drogba (Chelsea), Rooney (Man Utd), Kanoute (Sevilla)

GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (Ita)
Coupet (Lyon); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea), Puyol (Barcelona), Panucci (Roma); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Maniche (Atletico Madrid), Fabregas (Arsenal), Diego (Werder Bremen); Totti (Roma), Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)

KICKER (Ger)
Coupet (Lyon); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Vidic (Man Utd), Mertesacker (Werder Bremen); Iniesta (Barcelona), Perrotta (Roma), Gerrard (Liverpool), Malouda (Lyon); Pizarro (Bayern Munich), Totti (Roma), Ronaldinho (Barcelona)

SPORT-EXPRESS (Rus)
Van der Sar (Man Utd); Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid), Cannavaro (Real Madrid), Vidic (Man Utd), Mexes (Roma); Iniesta (Barcelona), Juninho (Lyon), Vieira (Inter); Totti (Roma), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Drogba (Chelsea)

VOETBAL INTERNATIONAL (Hol)
Coupet (Lyon); Rafinha (Schalke), Alex (PSV), Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Panucci (Roma); Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd), Vieira (Inter), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Malouda (Lyon); Totti (Roma), Klose (Werder Bremen)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)
Sorrentino (AEK Athens); Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Chivu (Roma); Iniesta (Barcelona), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Totti (Roma), Nakamura (Celtic); Carew (Lyon), Rooney (Man Utd), Kanoute (Sevilla)

Naval 0
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Ronny 87)

Pacos Ferreira 2 (Edson 25, Primo 57)
Aves 0

Monday, November 27
Setubal 1 (Mbamba 49)
Sporting Braga 2 (Paulo Jorge 45, Wender pen 79)

Friday, December 1
Sporting Lisbon 0
Benfica 2 (Ricardo Rocha 2, Simao 35)

Saturday, December 2
Beira Mar 1 (Jorge Leitao 51)
Belenenses 2 (Jose Pedro 5, Dady 42)

FC Porto 2 (Quaresma 51, Helder Postiga 73)
Boavista 0

Sunday, December 3
Aves 2 (Artur Futre 65, Filipe Anunciacao 80)
Naval 0

Estrela Amadora 2 (Jaime Junior 55, Tiago Gomes 62)
Nacional 0

Sporting Braga 4 (Cesinha 8, Paulo Jorge 15, Joao Pinto 50, Frechaut 60)
Academica 2 (Lino 2, Litos 40)

Uniao Leiria 0
Pacos Ferreira 0

Monday, December 4
Maritimo 1 (Lipatin 67)
Setubal 0

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	12	10	1	1	26	7	31
Sporting Lisbon	12	8	2	2	18	9	26
Sporting Braga	12	7	2	3	19	15	23
Benfica	11	7	1	3	23	13	22
Nacional	12	6	1	5	19	13	19
Maritimo	12	6	1	5	13	12	19
Uniao Leiria	12	5	3	4	11	13	18
Pacos Ferreira	12	4	5	3	13	14	17
Naval	12	4	4	4	10	11	16
Belenenses	11	4	2	5	9	9	14
Academica	12	3	4	5	17	19	13
Boavista	12	3	3	6	12	17	12
E Amadora	12	3	2	7	7	16	11
Setubal	12	2	3	7	8	16	9
Aves	12	2	2	8	10	19	8
Beira Mar	12	1	4	7	14	26	7

LEADING GOALSCORERS
8 Helder Postiga (FC Porto)
5 Roland Linz (Boavista)
5 Nei (Naval)
5 Ricardo Quaresma (FC Porto)
5 Ronny (Pacos Ferreira)

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shelbourne	30	18	8	4	60	27	62
Derry	30	18	8	4	46	20	62
Drogheda	30	16	10	4	37	23	58
Cork	30	15	11	4	37	15	56
Sligo	30	11	7	12	33	42	40
UCD	30	9	11	10	26	26	38
St Patrick's	30	9	10	11	32	29	37
Longford	30	8	10	12	23	27	34
Bohemians*	30	9	5	16	29	34	29
Bray	30	3	8	19	22	64	17
Waterford	30	2	6	22	20	58	12

**3pts deducted for fielding suspended player*

ROMANIA

Nov 11: Dinamo 3 Otelul 0; UTA 3 Jiul 0; Arges 1 Ceahlaul 0; Vaslui 1 Pandurii 0; Rapid 1 Urziceni 0.
Nov 12: Farul 3 Poli Iasi 0; Gloria 3 CFR Cluj 2; U Craiova 0 Poli Timisoara 1; Steaua 6 National 0.
Nov 17: Otelul 1 Gloria 1; U Craiova 1 Farul 0; National 0 Arges 2.
Nov 18: Poli Timisoara 2 UTA 0; Urziceni 1 Dinamo 1; Pandurii 0 Steaua 0; CFR Cluj 2 Poli Iasi 1.
Nov 19: Jiul 1 Vaslui 3; Ceahlaul 0 Rapid 3.
Nov 24: Gloria 0 Urziceni 0; Poli Iasi 1 Otelul 1.
Nov 25: Vaslui 1 Poli Timisoara 0; Farul 0 CFR Cluj 2; Arges 0 Pandurii 0.
Nov 26: Dinamo 2 Ceahlaul 0; Rapid 2 National 1; UTA 1 U Craiova 0; Steaua 3 Jiul 0.
Dec 1: Poli Iasi 1 Urziceni 3; Gloria 2 Ceahlaul 1.
Dec 2: Farul 0 UTA 0; Steaua 3 Poli Timisoara 1; Vaslui 3 U Craiova 3.
Dec 3: Rapid 1 Pandurii 1; CFR Cluj 2 Otelul 1; Arges 0 Jiul 1.
Dec 4: Dinamo 1 National 0.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	16	1	1	38	10	49
Steaua	18	11	5	2	37	10	38
Rapid	18	10	6	2	33	13	36
CFR Cluj	18	11	2	5	38	24	35
Gloria	18	9	3	6	24	18	30
Poli Timisoara	18	8	5	5	17	13	29
Otelul	18	8	2	8	24	32	26
Vaslui	18	7	4	7	24	29	25
UTA	18	7	3	8	17	19	24
Pandurii	18	6	5	7	15	17	23
U Craiova	18	6	5	7	22	33	23
Urziceni	18	6	3	9	14	19	21
Poli Iasi	18	5	6	7	18	26	21
Farul	18	5	5	8	20	21	20
Ceahlaul	18	5	2	11	13	25	17
Arges	18	4	2	12	12	23	14
Jiul	18	2	5	11	8	24	11
National	18	2	4	12	12	30	10

RUSSIA

Nov 12: Luch-Energiya 2 Rubin 1.
Nov 18: Luch-Energiya 0 CSKA 4; Dinamo 2 Torpedo 1; Rostov 3 Spartak Moscow 4; Saturn 1 Rubin 2; Amkar 1 Lokomotiv 3; Tom 1 FC Moscow 0; Shinnik 1 Zenit 2; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Spartak Nalchik 2.
Nov 25: Torpedo 1 Shinnik 1.
Nov 26: Zenit 0 Tom 0; FC Moscow 2 Saturn 1; Kryliya Sovetov 0 Spartak Moscow 1; CSKA 1 Dinamo 2; Rubin 1 Amkar 0; Lokomotiv 1 Rostov 0; Spartak Nalchik 0 Luch-Energiya 0.

RUSSIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	30	17	7	6	47	28	58
Spartak M	30	15	13	2	60	36	58
Lokomotiv	30	15	8	7	47	34	53
Zenit	30	13	11	6	42	30	50
Rubin	30	13	7	10	43	37	46
FC Moscow	30	10	13	7	41	37	43
Luch-Energiya	30	12	5	13	37	39	41
Tom	30	11	8	11	35	33	41
Spartak N	30	11	8	11	33	32	41
Kryliya Sovetov	30	10	8	12	37	35	38
Saturn	30	7	16	7	29	24	37
Rostov	30	10	6	14	42	48	36
Amkar	30	8	11	11	22	36	35
Dinamo	30	8	10	12	31	40	34
Torpedo	30	3	13	14	22	40	22
Shinnik	30	1	8	21	17	56	11

Relegated: Torpedo, Shinnik
Promoted: Khimki, Kuban Krasnodar

SCOTLAND

Saturday, November 11
Aberdeen 2 (J Smith 56, Miller 86)
Motherwell 1 (Hart og 61) Att: 10,527

Dundee United 1 (Hunt 71)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 5,815

Hibernian 2 (Fletcher 65, Killen pen 83)
Inverness 0 Att: 12,868

Rangers 2 (Boyd 61, Smith 77)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 48,218

Sunday, November 12
St Mirren 1 (Sutton 56)
Celtic 3 (Gravesen 2, 21, 69) Att: 8,445

Monday, November 13
Falkirk 1 (Latapy 84)
Hearts 1 (Velicka 65) Att: 6,289

Saturday, November 18
Aberdeen 2 (Mackie 77, 85)
St Mirren 0 Att: 11,426
Celtic 3 (Dods og 43, Vennegoor of Hesselink 72, Jarosik 85)
Inverness 0 Att: 56,637

Dunfermline 2 (Shields 76, Mason 89)
Dundee United 1 (Robson 52) Att: 6,129

Kilmarnock 2 (Hay 59, O'Donnell og 70)
Falkirk 1 (Stokes 42) Att: 5,666

Motherwell 1 (Maguire 83)
Hibernian 6 (Scott Brown 10, Killen 25, Sproule 29, 40, Jones 73, Shields 90) Att: 6,190

Sunday, November 19
Hearts 0
Rangers 1 (Novo 78) Att: 17,040

Saturday, November 25
Dunfermline 0
Aberdeen 3 (Miller 54, Mackie 83, 85) Att: 6,501

Inverness 0
Hearts 0 Att: 5,603

Motherwell 4 (Foran pen 45, pen 49, McDonald 75, Elliot 83)
Falkirk 2 (Stokes 36, Latapy 71) Att: 4,970

Sunday, November 26
Dundee United 1 (Hunt 64)
St Mirren 0 Att: 5,681

Hibernian 2 (Sproule 11, Thomson 64)
Celtic 2 (Sno 70, McGeady 73) Att: 16,747

Rangers 3 (Adam 23, Boyd 28, Prso 58)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 48,289

Saturday, December 2
Celtic 1 (Zurawski 72)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 58,911

Hibernian 2 (Jones 45, Fletcher 73)
Dundee United 1 (Martis og 24) Att: 14,032

Inverness 0
Motherwell 1 (Foran pen 90) Att: 3,668

Kilmarnock 5 (Greer 7, Di Giacomo 19, 25, Nish 27, 72)
Dunfermline 1 (Crawford 11) Att: 4,750

St Mirren 2 (Kean 19, 21)
Hearts 2 (Mikoliunas 1, Zaliukas 51) Att: 5,728

Sunday, December 3
Falkirk 1 (Twaddle 26)
Rangers 0 Att: 7,245

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	17	14	2	1	34	12	44
Rangers	17	8	4	5	26	17	28
Aberdeen	17	8	4	5	22	14	28
Hibernian	17	7	5	5	32	19	26
Kilmarnock	17	7	4	6	24	27	25
Hearts	17	6	6	5	23	18	24
Falkirk	17	6	3	8	21	23	21
Inverness	17	4	8	5	16	20	20
Motherwell	17	5	3	9	21	29	18
St Mirren	17	4	5	8	16	23	17
Dundee Utd	17	4	5	8	16	30	17
Dunfermline	17	3	3	11	12	31	12

LEADING GOALSCORERS
11 Anthony Stokes (Falkirk)
9 Chris Killen (Hibernian)

SERBIA

Nov 11: Zemun 1 Mladost 1; Borac 2 Vojvodina 1; Hajduk K 2 OFK 0; Partizan 2 Vozdovac 0; Bezanija 2 Banat 2.
Nov 12: Smederevo 1 Red Star 2.
Nov 18: Banat 1 Partizan 2; Red Star 5 Zemun 0; Mladost 1 Hajduk K 0; Vojvodina 1 Bezanija 0; OFK 0 Borac 0.
Nov 19: Vozdovac 3 Smederevo 0.
Nov 25: Borac 0 Mladost 0; Banat 2 Vozdovac 0; Zemun 0 Smederevo 1.
Nov 26: Hajduk K 0 Red Star 2; Partizan 0 Vojvodina 1; Bezanija 0 OFK 0.
Dec 2: Smederevo 1 Hajduk K 1; Vozdovac 1 Zemun 1; Mladost 1 Bezanija 1; Red Star 2 Borac 1; Vojvodina 4 Banat 2.
Dec 3: OFK 1 Partizan 1.

SERBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	16	13	2	1	27	7	41
Mladost	16	8	5	3	16	8	29
OFK	16	7	7	2	21	9	28
Partizan	16	8	3	5	22	15	27
Bezanija	16	5	9	2	19	13	24
Vojvodina	16	6	3	7	12	14	21
Banat	16	5	4	7	13	19	19
Hajduk K	16	6	1	9	11	18	19
Smederevo	16	4	6	6	12	16	18
Vozdovac	16	4	5	7	13	20	17
Borac	16	4	4	8	8	13	16
Zemun	16	0	3	13	5	27	3

SPAIN

Saturday, November 11
Atletico Madrid 3 (Ze Castro 36, Fernando Torres pen 47, Aguero 63)
Villarreal 1 (Fuentes 13) Att: 40,000

Valencia 1 (Morientes 43)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente 89) Att: 45,000

Sunday, November 12
Barcelona 3 (Ronaldinho 31, 86, Saviola 90)
Zaragoza 1 (G Milito 17) Att: 73,201

Betis 2 (Edu 5, Capi 90)
Levante 1 (Riga Mustapha 62) Att: 35,000

Celta Vigo 1 (Guayre 81)
Recreativo 2 (Sinama-Pongolle 47, Uche 56) Att: 13,000

Getafe 1 (Nacho Perez 59)
Mallorca 0 Att: 12,000

Gimnastic 0
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 12,000

Osasuna 1 (Valdo 63)
Real Madrid 4 (Van Nistelrooy 11, 26, 44, 83) Att: 17,753

Racing Santander 0
Sevilla 0 Att: 15,961

Real Sociedad 1 (Diaz de Cerio 30)
Espanyol 1 (Luis Garcia 53) Att: 18,910

Saturday, November 18
Real Madrid 3 (Sergio Ramos 5, Reyes 58, Diarra 70)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 78,000

Sevilla 3 (Escude 19, Luis Fabiano 55, Kanoute 71)
Valencia 0 Att: 45,000

Sunday, November 19
Deportivo La Coruna 0
Celta Vigo 1 (Nene 73) Att: 30,000

Espanyol 3 (Tamudo 53, 60, Pandiani 90)
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Yeste 47, Aduritz 66) Att: 18,850

Levante 0
Atletico Madrid 3 (Fernando Torres pen 33, Maniche 67, 74) Att: 18,941

Mallorca 1 (Victor 70)
Barcelona 4 (Gudjohnsen 42, 58, Iniesta 85, Ezquerro 90) Att: 21,000

Real Sociedad 0
Betis 0 Att: 19,000

Recreativo 2 (Javi Guerrero 45, Uche 75)
Osasuna 0 Att: 17,500

Villarreal 1 (Abbondanzieri og 50)
Getafe 0 Att: 18,000

Zaragoza 3 (Aimar 50, Oscar 54, Pique 69)
Gimnastic 0 Att: 29,000

Saturday, November 25
Atletico Madrid 1 (Ansotegi og 78)
Real Sociedad 1 (Uranga 24) Att: 25,000

Barcelona 4 (Ronaldinho pen 35, 88, Gudjohnsen 55, Iniesta 70)
Villarreal 0 Att: 78,417

Sunday, November 26
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Aduritz 68)
Sevilla 3 (Luis Fabiano 4, 90, Marti 10) Att: 35,000

Betis 1 (Robert pen 31)
Espanyol 1 (Pandiani 90) Att: 40,000

Celta Vigo 1 (Fernando Baiano 52)
Zaragoza 1 (D Milito 6) Att: 14,000

Getafe 0
Levante 0 Att: 10,000

Gimnastic 2 (Campano 40, Ruben Castro 72)
Mallorca 3 (Jankovic 55, Victor 62, Arango 88) Att: 12,000

Osasuna 4 (Soldado 5, 59, Valdo 22, Milosevic 90)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Juan Rodriguez 30) Att: 17,000

Racing Santander 4 (Zigic 14, 63, Garay pen 33, Colsa 41)
Recreativo 3 (Beto 29, Uche 61, Jesus 90) Att: 15,337

Valencia 0
Real Madrid 1 (Raul 51) Att: 50,000

Saturday, December 2
Betis 0
Atletico Madrid 1 (Galletti 33) Att: 35,000

Levante 1 (Alvaro 77)
Barcelona 1 (Deco 41) Att: 21,004

Recreativo 2 (Aitor 1, Sinama-Pongolle 82)
Valencia 0 Att: 20,000

Sunday, December 3
Deportivo La Coruna 0
Racing Santander 0 Att: 10,000

Espanyol 2 (Tamudo 68, Luis Garcia 79)
Sevilla 1 (Kanoute pen 22) Att: 22,230

Mallorca 2 (Jonas Gutierrez 6, Jankovic 52)
Celta Vigo 2 (Fernando Baiano 57, Jesus Perera pen 85) Att: 15,000

Real Madrid 2 (Ronaldo 64, Roberto Carlos 81)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Luis Prieto 34) Att: 78,000

Real Sociedad 0
Getafe 0 Att: 19,179

Villarreal 2 (Fuentes 23, Franco 28)
Gimnastic 0 Att: 19,000

Zaragoza 1 (D Milito 19)
Osasuna 2 (Raul Garcia 82, Ponzio og 90) Att: 29,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	13	9	3	1	32	11	30
Real Madrid	13	9	2	2	24	9	29
Sevilla	13	9	1	3	26	13	28
Atletico Madrid	13	7	3	3	18	9	24
Zaragoza	13	7	2	4	26	17	23
Recreativo	13	7	1	5	20	17	22
Getafe	13	6	3	4	10	8	21
Villarreal	13	6	3	4	14	16	21
Valencia	13	5	3	5	15	14	18
Celta Vigo	13	5	3	5	18	19	18
Dep La Coruna	13	4	5	4	11	13	17
Mallorca	13	4	5	4	11	14	17
Espanyol	13	3	7	3	12	14	16
R Santander	13	3	6	4	12	16	15
Osasuna	13	4	2	7	12	18	14
Levante	13	3	5	5	11	18	14
Betis	13	2	3	8	13	18	9
Athletic Bilbao	13	1	5	7	12	24	8
Real Sociedad	13	0	6	7	7	19	6
Gimnastic	13	1	2	10	11	28	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Frederic Kanoute (Sevilla)
10 Diego Milito (Zaragoza)
10 Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
8 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)
6 Fernando Baiano (Celta Vigo)

SWITZERLAND

Nov 18: Basle 3 Sion 1; Grasshopper 0 Zurich 1; Schaffhausen 1 Lucerne 1.
Nov 19: St Gallen 1 Thun 2; Young Boys 2 Aarau 1.
Nov 25: Young Boys 3 Schaffhausen 2; Lucerne 0 St Gallen 1.
Nov 26: Aarau 1 Grasshopper 0; Sion 3 Thun 0; Zurich 3 Basle 2.
Dec 2: St Gallen 1 Aarau 0; Thun 0 Zurich 2.
Dec 3: Grasshopper 1 Young Boys 2; Sion 2 Schaffhausen 2.
Dec 4: Basle 3 Lucerne 0.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich	17	12	1	4	36	16	37
Sion	17	9	5	3	34	24	32
St Gallen	17	10	2	5	29	21	32
Grasshopper	17	9	3	5	31	16	30
Basle	17	8	3	6	36	29	27
Young Boys	17	8	3	6	27	23	27
Lucerne	17	4	4	9	17	25	16
Schaffhausen	17	3	5	9	15	29	14
Thun	17	3	5	9	10	32	14
Aarau	17	3	1	13	11	31	10

TURKEY

Nov 10: Denizlispor 0 Fenerbahce 0.
Nov 11: Besiktas 0 Sivasspor 1.
Nov 12: Konyaspor 1 Kayserispor 1; Manisaspor 1 Ankaraspor 3; Ankaragucu 2 Rizespor 0; Gaziantepspor 1 Bursaspor 2; Erciyesspor 0 Genclerbirligi 2; Galatasaray 4 Sakaryaspor 0; Trabzonspor 0 Antalyaspor 0.
Nov 18: Kayserispor 2 Manisaspor 2; Sakaryaspor 0 Ankaragucu 0; Genclerbirligi 4 Konyaspor 1; Antalyaspor 0 Galatasaray 1.
Nov 19: Bursaspor 1 Denizlispor 0; Fenerbahce 0 Besiktas 0; Sivasspor 1 Trabzonspor 0; Ankaraspor 2 Gaziantepspor 0; Rizespor 0 Erciyesspor 0.
Nov 24: Besiktas 3 Bursaspor 1.
Nov 25: Gaziantepspor 1 Kayserispor 2; Manisaspor 0 Konyaspor 1; Galatasaray 3 Sivasspor 1; Denizlispor 1 Ankaraspor 1.
Nov 26: Ankaragucu 1 Antalyaspor 0; Erciyesspor 2 Sakaryaspor 0; Trabzonspor 1 Fenerbahce 2; Rizespor 0 Genclerbirligi 1.
Dec 1: Bursaspor 2 Trabzonspor 1.
Dec 2: Ankaraspor 0 Besiktas 0; Sivasspor 2 Ankaragucu 1; Konyaspor 2 Rizespor 0; Kayserispor 1 Denizlispor 0.
Dec 3: Sakaryaspor 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Manisaspor 4 Gaziantepspor 1; Fenerbahce 2 Galatasaray 1; Antalyaspor 3 Erciyesspor 1.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	16	10	4	2	34	15	34
Galatasaray	16	7	6	3	29	19	27
Manisaspor	16	8	3	5	32	23	27
Besiktas	16	7	5	4	21	15	26
Kayserispor	16	7	5	4	21	18	26
Bursaspor	16	7	3	6	20	18	24
Genclerbirligi	16	7	3	6	19	18	24
Konyaspor	16	6	6	4	19	19	24
Ankaraspor	16	4	11	1	21	15	23
Ankaragucu	16	5	7	4	20	15	22
Sivasspor	16	6	3	7	17	22	21
Denizlispor	16	4	6	6	13	15	18
Antalyaspor	16	3	8	5	18	20	17
Gaziantepspor	16	4	5	7	17	25	17
Trabzonspor	16	4	4	8	17	21	16
Rizespor	16	4	3	9	11	19	15
Sakaryaspor	16	3	6	7	9	18	15
Erciyesspor	16	2	4	10	15	38	10

UKRAINE

Nov 11: Karpaty 1 Dynamo 1; Shakhtar 2 Chornomorets 0.
Nov 12: Dnipro 3 Zorya 0; Stal 0 Kryvbas 0; Arsenal 2 Illichivets 0; Vorskla 2 Metalurh D 0; FC Kharkiv 0 Metalurh Z 0; Tavriya 2 Metalist 0.
Nov 17: Dynamo 5 Arsenal 2.
Nov 18: Metalurh Z 0 Shakhtar 3.
Nov 19: Chornomorets 1 Karpaty 0; Illichivets 2 Vorskla 0; Kryvbas 3 FC Kharkiv 1; Metalist 1 Dnipro 0; Metalurh D 1 Tavriya 2; Zorya 1 Stal 0.
Nov 25: Illichivets 1 Tavriya 0.
Nov 26: Chornomorets 2 Dynamo 3; Metalurh D 1 Dnipro 1; Zorya 0 FC Kharkiv 1; Metalurh Z 1 Karpaty 2; Metalist 1 Stal 0; Arsenal 1 Vorskla 0.
Nov 27: Kryvbas 0 Shakhtar 1.
Dec 2: Karpaty 1 Arsenal 1.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	16	13	3	0	38	12	42
Shakhtar	16	12	2	2	36	6	38
Metalist	16	8	5	3	18	13	29
Arsenal	16	6	7	3	18	17	25
Dnipro	16	5	9	2	14	9	24
Karpaty	16	6	5	5	13	16	23
Tavriya	16	6	3	7	14	15	21
Metalurh D	16	5	6	5	14	16	21
Chornomorets	16	5	5	6	20	23	20
Kryvbas	16	4	8	4	17	19	20
Vorskla	16	4	4	8	12	17	16
Metalurh Z	16	3	7	6	9	18	16
Illichivets	16	4	3	9	13	20	15
FC Kharkiv	16	3	4	9	14	27	13
Zorya	16	2	6	8	13	24	12
Stal	16	2	3	11	10	21	9

SOUTH AMERICA

SUDAMERICANA CUP

Semi-finals

1st legs - Nov 15/16; 2nd legs - Nov 21/22
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) v Pachuca (Mex)
0-1, 1-4 (agg 1-5)
Colo Colo (Chl) v Toluca (Mex)
2-1, 2-0 (agg 4-1)

Final, 1st leg

Nov 30 - Estadio Hidalgo, Pachuca
Pachuca 1 (Chitiva 27)
Colo Colo 1 (Suazo 50)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Pachuca: Calero - Salazar, Lopez (Saucedo 71), Mosquera, Pinto, Aguilar (Rodriguez 46), Correa, Caballero (Alvarez 58), Chitiva, Gimenez, Cacho.
Colo Colo: Cejas - Riffo, Henriquez, Vidal, Ormeno (Villarroel 78), Melendez, Sanhueza, Fierro (Mena 88), Fernandez, Sanchez (Gonzalez 60), Suazo.

ARGENTINA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday, November 11
Banfield 1 (Gonzalez 30)
Arsenal 2 (Gomez 11, Caffa 31)

Estudiantes 3 (Alayes 16, Benitez 64, Lussenhoff og 80)
River Plate 1 (Nasuti 72)

Sunday, November 12
Belgrano 0
Gimnasia J 1 (Gandin 83)

Boca Juniors 3 (Palermo 21, pen 77, Palacio 50)
Quilmes 1 (Rusculleda 53)

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Esmerado 84)
Lanus 3 (Acosta 20, Graf 65, Leto 72)

Gimnasia LP 0
Velez Sarsfield 3 (Papa 16, Pellegrino 57, Zarate 89)

Godoy Cruz 4 (Villar 4, 74, Torresi pen 49, Valles 89)
Nueva Chicago 0

***Independiente 2** (Montenegro pen 7, 52)
Racing Club 0
**Match abandoned in 64th minute because of crowd trouble; result stood*

Rosario Central 2 (Ledesma 2, 36)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Choy 34)

San Lorenzo 2 (Jimenez 7, 15)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Ansaldi 75)

Friday, November 17
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Choy 3, Denis og 75)
Independiente 0

Saturday, November 18
Arsenal 1 (Perez 8)
Rosario Central 0

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

GOLDEN SHOE

STANDINGS ON DECEMBER 3

POS		TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Maksim Gruznov	Trans Narva (Est)	31	1	31
2	Daniel Nannskog	Stabaek (Nor)	19	1.5	28.5
3	Veigar Pall Gunnarsson	Stabaek (Nor)	18	1.5	27
	Dmitri Lipartov	Trans Narva (Est)	27	1	27
	Roman Pavlyuchenko	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	18	1.5	27
6	Steffen Iversen	Rosenborg (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
7	Aram Hakopyan	Banants (Arm)	25	1	25
	Vjatselav Zahhovaiko	Flora Tallinn (Est)	25	1	25
9	Alexander Zickler	Salzburg (Aut)	16	1.5	24
10	Afonso Alves	Heerenveen (Hol)	15	1.5	22.5
11	Nshan Erzrumyan	Kil/Ararat (Arm)	22	1	22
12	Jo	CSKA Moscow (Rus)	14	1.5	21
	Indrek Zelinski	Levadia Tallinn (Est)	21	1	21
14	Frederic Kanoute	Sevilla (Spa)	10	2	20
	Miroslav Klose	Werder Bremen (Ger)	10	2	20
	Diego Milito	Zaragoza (Spa)	10	2	20
	Ronaldinho	Barcelona (Spa)	10	2	20
18	Alejandro Dominguez	Rubin Kazan (Rus)	13	1.5	19.5
	Dmitri Loskov	Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)	13	1.5	19.5
	Pavel Pogrebnyak	Tom Tomsk (Rus)	13	1.5	19.5
21	Aleksandr Dubokin	Trans Narva (Est)	19	1	19

Lanus 1 (Graf 23)
Nueva Chicago 0

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Cardozo pen 31)
Estudiantes 2 (Calderon 90, Piatti 90)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Zarate 20, 66)
Godoy Cruz 0

Sunday, November 19
Colon Santa Fe 2 (Enria 59, Ramirez 76)
Belgrano 0

Gimnasia J 1 (Ramon 45)
Boca Juniors 2 (Cardozo 27, Diaz 63)

Quilmes 1 (Torres pen 50)
Banfield 2 (Cvitanich 43, 85)

River Plate 2 (Gallardo 52, Higuain 55)
Gimnasia LP 0

Friday, November 24
Rosario Central 4 (Di Maria 46, Ruben 56, 90, De Porras 90)
Quilmes 2 (Soria 20, Ibanez 73)

San Lorenzo 0
Argentinos Juniors 0

Saturday, November 25
Estudiantes 2 (Galvan 16, Saucedo 76)
Racing Club 0

Nueva Chicago 1 (Higuain 33)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Varea 74)

Sunday, November 26
Banfield 1 (Luchetti pen 80)
Gimnasia J 2 (Gandin 53, Balvorin pen 90)

Belgrano 1 (Bolatti 86)
Lanus 1 (Graf 81)

Boca Juniors 4 (Cardozo 17, Marino 51, Palacio 61, 90)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Hernandez pen 24)

Gimnasia LP 2 (Landa 13, Silva pen 68)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Ansaldi 19)

Godoy Cruz 0
River Plate 1 (Belluschi 61)

Independiente 2 (Gioda 34, 39)
Arsenal 1 (Raymonda 10)

Friday, December 1
Lanus 2 (Hoyos 19, Pelletieri 35)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Quilmes 1 (Bustos Montoya 26)
Independiente 3 (Abraham 10, Orteman 20, Denis 28)

Saturday, December 2
Arsenal 2 (Valdemarin 6, 21)
San Lorenzo 2 (Quattrocchi 4, Silvera 42)

Colon Santa Fe 3 (Ramirez 10, Enria 42, Grisales 90)
Banfield 0

Newell's Old Boys 2 (Salcedo 31, Cardozo 78)
Godoy Cruz 2 (Torresi 24, Poy 29)

Racing Club 3 (Sava pen 17, 22, Bergessio 53)
Gimnasia LP 1 (Silva pen 15)

Sunday, December 3
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Quinteros 24, Choy 90)
Estudiantes 2 (Pavone 79, Veron 89)

Belgrano 1 (Peppino 60)
Boca Juniors 0

Gimnasia J 1 (Garcia 90)
Rosario Central 0

River Plate 1 (Farias 2)
Nueva Chicago 2 (Higuain 49, Martinez 63)

ARGENTINA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors	18	14	2	2	40	15	44
Estudiantes	18	13	2	3	33	12	41
River Plate	18	11	4	3	32	16	37
Independiente	18	10	2	6	32	22	32
Arsenal	18	9	5	4	26	20	32
Velez Sarsfield	18	8	5	5	24	17	29
Lanus	18	8	4	6	24	23	28
Racing Club	17	7	4	6	22	18	25
Rosario Central	18	7	4	7	25	22	25
San Lorenzo	17	7	4	6	27	29	25
Gimnasia J	18	7	2	9	17	18	23
Belgrano	18	6	5	7	17	21	23
Argentinos Jnrs	18	5	5	8	22	27	20
Gimnasia LP	18	6	2	10	20	40	20
Nueva Chicago	18	5	4	9	18	31	19
Colon Santa Fe	18	5	3	10	20	31	18
Banfield	18	3	8	7	18	25	17
Newell's OB	18	3	7	8	20	26	16
Godoy Cruz	18	3	7	8	19	26	16
Quilmes	18	1	3	14	19	36	6

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Rodrigo Palacio (Boca Juniors)
12 Mauro Zarate (Velez Sarsfield)
10 Oscar Cardozo (Newell's Old Boys)
10 Daniel Montenegro (Independiente)

BOLIVIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP Play-offs

Nov 18: Real Potosi 4 Bolivar 2.
Nov 19: Blooming 1 Jorge Wilstermann 2; Universitario 1 Oriente 2.
Nov 22: Real Potosi 2 Blooming 1; Oriente 2 Jorge Wilstermann 1.
Nov 23: Universitario 2 Bolivar 0.
Nov 26: Bolivar 2 Blooming 2; Jorge Wilstermann 2 Universitario 0; Oriente 0 Real Potosi 3.
Nov 29: Bolivar 7 Oriente 1; Blooming 2 Universitario 2.
Dec 3: Jorge Wilstermann 2 Real Potosi 1.

BOLIVIA – CLOSING PLAY-OFFS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
J Wilstermann*	10	6	2	2	16	8	21
Real Potosi	10	5	2	3	20	15	17
Oriente	10	3	4	3	13	21	13
Universitario	10	3	3	4	12	13	12
Blooming	10	2	5	3	14	15	11
Bolivar*	10	1	4	5	15	18	8

**Jorge Wilstermann and Bolivar received one bonus point for winning their regular season group*

BRAZIL

Nov 11: Santos 1 Parana 0; Vasco da Gama 1 Juventude 1; Internacional 3 Fortaleza 0.
Nov 12: Fluminense 1 Cruzeiro 0; Figueirense 0 Corinthians 0; Ponte Preta 3 Flamengo 0; Atletico Paranaense 2 Gremio 3; Goias 0 Sao Paulo 2; Santa Cruz 0 Sao Caetano 3; Palmeiras 2 Botafogo 1.
Nov 18: Corinthians 1 Fluminense 1; Flamengo 0 Figueirense 2; Gremio 3 Santa Cruz 1.
Nov 19: Botafogo 2 Goias 2; Juventude 3 Palmeiras 2; Sao Paulo 1 Atletico Paranaense 1; Sao Caetano 0 Vasco da Gama 1; Parana 1 Internacional 0; Cruzeiro 1 Santos 1; Fortaleza 1 Ponte Preta 0.
Nov 26: Botafogo 0 Corinthians 0; Gremio 3 Flamengo 0; Juventude 2 Fortaleza 2; Sao Paulo 2 Cruzeiro 0; Sao Caetano 0 Parana 2; Atletico Paranaense 1 Figueirense 4; Vasco da Gama 1 Santos 1; Goias 3 Ponte Preta 0; Santa Cruz 1 Fluminense 2; Palmeiras 1 Internacional 4.
Dec 2: Internacional 1 Goias 4; Flamengo 4 Sao Caetano 1.
Dec 3: Fluminense 1 Palmeiras 1; Figueirense 0 Vasco da Gama 0; Santos 3 Santa Cruz 1; Ponte Preta 1 Atletico Paranaense 1; Parana 0 Sao Paulo 0; Cruzeiro 3 Botafogo 1; Fortaleza 1 Gremio 0; Corinthians 5 Juventude 3.

BRAZIL – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	38	22	12	4	66	32	78
Internacional	38	20	9	9	52	36	69
Gremio	38	20	7	11	64	45	67
Santos	38	18	10	10	58	36	64
Parana	38	18	6	14	56	49	60
Vasco da Gama	38	15	14	9	57	50	59
Figueirense	38	15	12	11	52	44	57
Goias	38	15	10	13	63	49	55
Corinthians	38	15	8	15	41	46	53
Cruzeiro	38	14	11	13	52	45	53
Flamengo	38	15	7	16	44	48	52
Botafogo	38	13	12	13	52	50	51
At Paranaense	38	13	9	16	61	62	48
Juventude	38	13	8	17	44	54	47
Fluminense	38	11	12	15	48	58	45
Palmeiras	38	12	8	18	58	70	44
Ponte Preta	38	10	9	19	45	65	39
Fortaleza	38	8	14	16	39	62	38
Sao Caetano	38	9	9	20	37	53	36
Santa Cruz	38	7	7	24	41	76	28

Relegated: Ponte Preta, Fortaleza, Sao Caetano, Santa Cruz
Promoted: Atletico Mineiro, Sport Recife, Nautico, America

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP League stage

Nov 10: Coquimbo Unido 2 Santiago Wanderers 0.
Nov 11: U Catolica 1 Cobreloa 0; Huachipato 2 U de Concepcion 3; Colo Colo 2 Audax Italiano 3; Everton 2 Cobresal 0; Puerto Montt 2 Palestino 1.
Nov 12: Union Espanola 0 O'Higgins 2; Antofagasta 3 Dep La Serena 2; Santiago Morning 1 U de Chile 0.
Nov 15: Huachipato 0 Coquimbo Unido 1.
Nov 18: Audax Italiano 2 Coquimbo Unido 0; Dep La Serena 2 U Catolica 3; Palestino 2 Huachipato 4.
Nov 19: U de Chile 1 Antofagasta 0; Rangers 1 Puerto Montt 2; Santiago Wanderers 2 Union Espanola 2; Cobreloa 2 Santiago Morning 1; U de Concepcion 5 Everton 1.
Nov 22: Cobresal 4 Colo Colo 1.

CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cobreloa	18	11	4	3	40	24	37
Colo Colo	18	8	5	5	37	31	29
S Wanderers	18	8	4	6	22	21	28
Palestino	18	5	5	8	16	25	20
Cobresal	18	5	3	10	20	28	18

GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
O'Higgins	18	10	5	3	31	20	35
Coquimbo U'do	18	8	5	5	23	22	29
Rangers	18	6	6	6	22	24	24
Huachipato	18	6	2	10	29	32	20
U Espanola	18	3	5	10	20	34	14

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Puerto Montt	18	10	3	5	26	21	33
Audax Italiano	18	9	2	7	32	24	29
U Concepcion	18	7	4	7	34	30	25
Dep La Serena	18	4	6	8	32	39	18
S Morning	18	4	5	9	22	32	17

GROUP 4 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Catolica	18	9	4	5	24	18	31
U de Chile	18	7	2	9	24	25	23
Antofagasta	18	5	6	7	25	25	21
Everton	18	5	6	7	23	27	21

Group winners and the three runners-up with most points qualified for quarter-finals; the other runners-up and the third-placed side with most points entered qualifying play-off

Qualifying play-off

Nov 22: Santiago Wanderers 0 U de Chile 1.

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 25/26; 2nd legs - Dec 2/3/6
Audax Italiano v U Catolica
1-0, 3-0 (agg 4-0)
Colo Colo v Puerto Montt
1-0, 4-0 (agg 5-0)
Coquimbo Unido v O'Higgins
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
U de Chile v Cobreloa
1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP Regular season

Nov 12: At Huila 2 Indep Santa Fe 1; Once Caldas 1 Tolima 3; At Junior 2 Chico 0; Cucuta 1 Envigado 0; America 0 At Nacional 2; Quindio 1 Bucaramanga 0; Indep Medellin 3 Dep Cali 1; Dep Pasto 0 Real Cartagena 2; Millonarios 2 Pereira 3.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING – REGULAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	18	10	4	4	31	19	34
Indep Medellin	18	10	2	6	29	22	32
Chico	18	10	2	6	22	15	32
At Huila	18	9	4	5	25	17	31
At Nacional	18	9	4	5	20	15	31
Cucuta	18	9	4	5	22	18	31
Dep Pasto	18	9	3	6	23	15	30
Millonarios	18	8	3	7	23	19	27
Quindio	18	8	3	7	24	25	27
Dep Cali	18	6	7	5	23	21	25
Real Cartagena	18	7	4	7	17	17	25
Indep Santa Fe	18	6	6	6	34	30	24
Pereira	18	6	4	8	23	24	22
At Junior	18	5	5	8	19	29	20
Once Caldas	18	5	4	9	23	31	19
Bucaramanga	18	4	4	10	22	32	16
America	18	3	4	11	20	33	13
Envigado	18	3	3	12	14	32	12

Top eight qualified for play-offs

Play-offs

Nov 18: At Nacional 2 Dep Pasto 1.
Nov 19: At Huila 0 Cucuta 1; Chico 2 Tolima 0; Millonarios 1 Indep Medellin 0.
Nov 25: Tolima 1 At Nacional 0.
Nov 26: Cucuta 2 Millonarios 0; Indep Medellin 3 At Huila 0; Dep Pasto 1 Chico 1.
Dec 2: At Nacional 2 Chico 0.
Dec 3: Cucuta 2 Indep Medellin 1; At Huila 3 Millonarios 2; Dep Pasto 2 Tolima 1.
Dec 6: Chico 1 At Nacional 1; Indep Medellin 2 Cucuta 1; At Huila 1 Millonarios 2; Tolima 4 Dep Pasto 0.

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Tolima	4	2	0	2	6	4	6
Chico	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Dep Pasto	4	1	1	2	4	8	4

CLOSING PLAY-OFFS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cucuta	4	3	0	1	6	3	9
Indep Medellin	4	2	0	2	6	4	6
Millonarios	4	2	0	2	5	6	6
At Huila	4	1	0	3	4	8	3

ECUADOR

OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

Nov 12: El Nacional 0 LDU Quito 3; Barcelona 1 Dep Quito 0; Olmedo 3 Emelec 0.
Nov 19: Emelec 2 LDU Quito 1; Dep Quito 2 Olmedo 0; El Nacional 4 Barcelona 0.
Nov 24: Barcelona 0 El Nacional 0; LDU Quito 3 Emelec 2; Olmedo 2 Dep Quito 0.
Dec 3: Emelec 3 Olmedo 1; Dep Quito 3 Barcelona 0; LDU Quito 0 El Nacional 0.

ECUADOR – OVERALL CHAMP'SHIP PLAY-OFFS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	7	3	2	2	12	7	14 [3]
El Nacional	7	2	3	2	12	8	14 [5]
Emelec	7	3	1	3	13	14	12 [2]
Barcelona	7	3	2	2	6	10	12 [1]
Olmedo	7	2	3	2	10	9	10 [1]
Dep Quito	7	2	1	4	9	14	7

Teams received bonus points (figure in brackets) relating to finishing position in opening and closing championships – 3pts for a 1st place; 2pts for a 2nd place; 1pt for a 3rd place

PARAGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 10: Fernando de la Mora 0 Libertad 2.
Nov 11: 2 de Mayo 2 Olimpia 1; Nacional 0 Sportivo Luqueno 0.
Nov 12: Cerro Porteno 5 Guarani 1; 12 de Octubre 3 3 de Febrero 2.
Nov 17: Sportivo Luqueno 1 Fernando de la Mora 0.
Nov 18: Libertad 1 Cerro Porteno 4; Tacuary 2 Nacional 1; Guarani 1 12 de Octubre 1; 3 de Febrero 1 2 de Mayo 2.
Nov 24: 2 de Mayo 2 Guarani 0; Fernando de la Mora 0 Tacuary 2; Olimpia 1 3 de Febrero 1.
Nov 25: 12 de Octubre 1 Libertad 2.
Nov 26: Cerro Porteno 3 Sportivo Luqueno 1.
Dec 1: Libertad 2 2 de Mayo 2; Tacuary 1 Cerro Porteno 2.
Dec 2: Guarani 0 Olimpia 0.
Dec 3: Sportivo Luqueno 2 12 de Octubre 1; Nacional 3 Fernando de la Mora 1.

PARAGUAY – CLOSING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	20	16	4	0	35	10	52
Libertad	20	12	5	3	35	20	41
2 de Mayo	20	9	6	5	27	21	33
Tacuary	20	8	8	4	25	19	32
Nacional	20	8	5	7	29	21	29
Olimpia	20	5	8	7	22	22	23
Sp Luqueno	20	5	8	7	20	30	23
Guarani	20	4	9	7	21	26	21
3 de Febrero	20	4	5	11	17	26	17
12 de Octubre	20	3	5	12	21	35	14
F'do de la Mora	20	3	3	14	14	36	12

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 11: Alianza Lima 1 Cienciano 2; Universidad SMP 0 Union Huaral 1; Alianza Atletico 0 Melgar 0.
Nov 12: Jose Galvez 1 Universitario 3; Sport Boys 0 Sporting Cristal 1; Sport Ancash 0 Coronel Bolognesi 1.
Nov 25: Coronel Bolognesi 3 Sport Boys 0; Melgar 1 Sport Ancash 1.
Nov 26: Universitario 3 Universidad SMP 0; Sporting Cristal 0 Alianza Lima 1; Union Huaral 1 Alianza Atletico 2; Cienciano 1 Jose Galvez 0.
Dec 2: Alianza Lima 0 Coronel Bolognesi 0; Sport Boys 3 Sport Ancash 2; Universidad SMP 4 Cienciano 1.
Dec 3: Melgar 2 Union Huaral 1; Alianza Atletico 0 Universitario 0; Jose Galvez 1 Sporting Cristal 0.

PERU – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Lima	20	11	5	4	26	14	38
C Bolognesi	20	11	3	6	30	17	36
Universitario	20	10	5	5	31	23	35
Cienciano	20	11	2	7	34	29	35
Melgar	20	8	7	5	21	18	31
Sporting Cristal	20	9	3	8	24	13	30
Univ SMP	20	8	4	8	20	21	28
Sport Boys	20	7	4	9	20	26	25
Jose Galvez	20	5	6	9	19	24	21
Alianza Atletico	20	5	5	10	28	36	20
Sport Ancash	20	5	5	10	22	35	20
Union Huaral	20	4	3	13	14	33	15

URUGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 11: Defensor 2 Central Espanol 3; Liverpool 1 Nacional 2.
Nov 12: Rentistas 3 Bella Vista 0; River Plate 0 Cerrito 3; Penarol 4 Progreso 0; Rampla Juniors 0 Tacuarembo 0; Rocha 1 Danubio 2; Wanderers 5 Miramar Misiones 2.
Nov 18: Tacuarembo 2 Liverpool 1; Progreso 3 River Plate 1; Central Espanol 1 Penarol 2.
Nov 19: Bella Vista 3 Wanderers 1; Nacional 1 Defensor 4; Cerrito 1 Rentistas 1; Danubio 2 Rampla Juniors 1; Miramar Misiones 0 Rocha 0.
Nov 25: Rocha 0 Bella Vista 1; Liverpool 3 Danubio 3; Wanderers 2 Cerrito 0; Rentistas 1 Progreso 2.
Nov 26: Penarol 4 Nacional 1; Rampla Juniors 0 Miramar Misiones 1; Defensor 2 Tacuarembo 1; River Plate 0 Central Espanol 1.
Dec 5: Miramar Misiones 1 Liverpool 2; Tacuarembo 0 Penarol 1; Bella Vista 2 Rampla Juniors 1.
Dec 6: Progreso 2 Wanderers 3; Danubio 0 Defensor 2; Central Espanol 2 Rentistas 1; Nacional 1 River Plate 0; Cerrito 0 Rocha 0.

URUGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Penarol	14	10	2	2	29	14	32
Danubio	14	10	1	3	32	16	31
Defensor	14	9	3	2	28	13	30
Bella Vista	14	9	1	4	21	13	28
Nacional	14	7	3	4	26	21	24
Wanderers	14	7	3	4	20	17	24
Liverpool	14	6	4	4	22	16	22
Central Espanol	14	7	1	6	20	23	22
Tacuarembo	14	4	3	7	14	17	15
Rocha	14	4	3	7	14	19	15
River Plate	14	4	2	8	14	24	14
M Misiones	14	3	4	7	17	26	13
Rampla Jnrs	14	3	3	8	12	19	12
Cerrito*	14	3	4	7	12	18	10
Progreso	14	2	4	8	14	30	10
Rentistas	14	1	5	8	12	21	8

**3pts deducted for crowd trouble during a home game*

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 12: Mineros Guayana 3 Portuguesa 2; Trujillanos 0 Caracas 1; Aragua 0 UA Maracaibo 1; Dep Tachira 1 Monagas 1; Zamora 4 Carabobo 0.
Nov 19: Carabobo 2 Portuguesa 0; Caracas 2 Mineros Guayana 0; UA Maracaibo 2 Trujillanos 1; Monagas 2 Aragua 1; Zamora 1 Dep Tachira 0.
Nov 26: Portuguesa 0 Caracas 1; Aragua 1 Zamora 0; Trujillanos 1 Monagas 1; Mineros Guayana 2 UA Maracaibo 2; Dep Tachira 1 Carabobo 0.

VENEZUELA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UA Maracaibo	16	9	6	1	24	13	33
Caracas	16	8	6	2	21	10	30
Mineros G'ana	16	7	5	4	26	22	26
Dep Tachira	16	5	7	4	20	18	22
Portuguesa	16	4	8	4	21	20	20
Carabobo	16	4	8	4	16	19	20
Aragua	16	4	6	6	21	22	18
Zamora	16	3	8	5	21	21	17
Trujillanos	16	2	5	9	19	29	11
Monagas	16	1	7	8	13	28	10

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Nov 11: Queretaro 1 Atlas 1; Cruz Azul 1 Santos 0; Monterrey 2 Toluca 1; Pachuca 2 Atlante 2; Guadalajara 1 Jaguares 0; Necaxa 1 Veracruz 2.
Nov 12: Pumas UNAM 5 Tigres 0; America 2 Morelia 1; Tecos UAG 0 San Luis 0.

MEXICO – OPENING – GROUP 1 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	17	9	3	5	27	20	30
Atlas	17	7	6	4	25	19	27
Guadalajara	17	7	5	5	26	18	26
Jaguares	17	6	5	6	19	16	23
Queretaro	17	5	6	6	20	25	21
Necaxa	17	4	5	8	18	26	17

GROUP 2 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monterrey	17	7	6	4	27	21	27
Pachuca	17	7	5	5	32	22	26
Veracruz	17	8	2	7	26	31	26
San Luis	17	6	5	6	14	12	23
Atlante	17	6	5	6	19	20	23
Tecos UAG	17	3	4	10	22	35	13

GROUP 3 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pumas UNAM	17	8	5	4	21	11	29
America	17	8	5	4	21	15	29
Toluca	17	7	6	4	27	16	27
Morelia	17	7	2	8	24	26	23
Tigres	17	3	5	9	14	37	14
Santos	17	1	8	8	19	31	11

Top two in each group qualified automatically for quarter-finals. The three third-placed sides and the fourth-placed team with the best record entered qualifying play-offs to determine the last two quarter-finalists

Qualifying play-offs

1st legs - Nov 15/16; 2nd legs - Nov 18/19
Jaguares v Toluca
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Veracruz v Guadalajara
1-2, 0-4 (agg 1-6)

Quarter-finals

1st legs - Nov 22/23/24; 2nd legs - Nov 25/26
Atlas v America
1-3, 3-3 (agg 4-6)
Guadalajara v Cruz Azul
2-0, 2-2 (agg 4-2)
Monterrey v Toluca
0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Pachuca v Pumas UNAM
1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1)

Semi-finals

1st legs - Nov 29/30; 2nd legs - Dec 3
Guadalajara v America
2-0, 0-0 (agg 2-0)
Pachuca v Toluca
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)

Final, 1st leg

Dec 7
Guadalajara 1 (Bravo 44)
Toluca 1 (Marioni 76)
HT: 1-0

UNITED STATES

Championship Final (MLS Cup)

Nov 12 - Pizza Hut Park, Frisco
Houston Dynamo 1 (Ching 114)
New England Revolution 1 (Twellman 113)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Att:** 22,427.
Ref: Marrufo
Houston Dynamo 4-3 on pens

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final, 1st leg

Oct 29 - International stadium, Cairo
Al Ahly (Egy) 1 (Aboutraika 25)
CS Sfaxien (Tun) 1 (Frimpong 52)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 74,100. **Ref:** Sowe (Gam)
Al Ahly: El-Hadary - Gomaa, Mohamed, Shadid (Al-Shater 69), Sedik, Shawky, Abdellah, Barakat (Hassan 80), Ashour, Aboutraika, Moteab (Riad 79), Flavio.
CS Sfaxien: Jaouachi - Boujelbene (Mechergui 90), Garbi, Massaoud, Mrabet, Al-Abdi, Nafti, Merdassi, Ziadi (Kouassi 73), Frimpong (Berguagi 90), Hammami.

Final, 2nd leg

Nov 11 - November 7 stadium, Rades
CS Sfaxien 0
Al Ahly 1 (Aboutraika 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 52,000. **Ref:** Codjia (Ben)
Al Ahly 2-1 on agg
CS Sfaxien: Jaouachi - Boujelbene, Garbi, Massaoud, Mrabet, Mechergui, Nafti, Merdassi, Ziadi (Younes 80), Frimpong, Hammami (Kouassi 89).
Al Ahly: El-Hadary - Mohamed, Shadid, Sedik (Riad 69), Aboutraika, Mensah (Moteab 41), Ashour, Flavio, Abdellah (Al-Shater 65), Gomaa, Mostafa.

CONFEDERATION CUP

Final, 1st leg

Nov 18
FAR Rabat (Mor) 1 (Nafkha og 72)
Etoile Sahel (Tun) 1 (Gilson 33)
HT: 0-1
Sent off: Ben Mohamed (Etoile Sahel) 69min

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 2
Etoile Sahel 0
FAR Rabat 0
Ref: Bennett (SAf)
Agg 1-1. Etoile Sahel on away goals

ASIA

JAPAN

Nov 11: Kashima Antlers 3 Gamba Osaka 1; Urawa Reds 1 Yokohama F Marinos 0; JEF United 1 Albirex Niigata 3; FC Tokyo 5 Kawasaki Frontale 4; Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Omiya Ardija 1; Kyoto Purple Sanga 1 Ventforet Kofu 1; Cerezo Osaka 2 Jubilo Iwata 3; Avispa Fukuoka 0 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2; Oita Trinita 0 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1.
Nov 18: Omiya Ardija 0 Kashima Antlers 3; Kawasaki Frontale 2 Avispa Fukuoka 1; Yokohama F Marinos 2 Shimizu S-Pulse 3; Ventforet Kofu 2 Oita Trinita 0; Jubilo Iwata 4 FC Tokyo 1; Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Urawa Reds 0; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Kyoto Purple Sanga 0.
Nov 19: Albirex Niigata 2 Cerezo Osaka 2; Gamba Osaka 1 JEF United 0.
Nov 23: Kashima Antlers 5 Albirex Niigata 1; Urawa Reds 3 Ventforet Kofu 0; JEF United 0 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; FC Tokyo 1 Yokohama F Marinos 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 4 Kawasaki Frontale 3; Kyoto Purple Sanga 1 Jubilo Iwata 3; Cerezo Osaka 1 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1; Avispa Fukuoka 1 Gamba Osaka 1; Oita Trinita 1 Omiya Ardija 2.
Nov 26: Omiya Ardija 2 Cerezo Osaka 0; FC Tokyo 0 Urawa Reds 0; Kawasaki Frontale 3 Kashima Antlers 2; Yokohama F Marinos 0 Oita Trinita 1; Ventforet Kofu 2 JEF United 3; Jubilo Iwata 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 0; Nagoya Grampus Eight 2 Avispa Fukuoka 0; Gamba Osaka 3 Kyoto Purple Sanga 2; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2 Albirex Niigata 1.
Dec 2: Kashima Antlers 3 Jubilo Iwata 0; Urawa Reds 3 Gamba Osaka 2; JEF United 0 Yokohama F Marinos 2; Albirex Niigata 1 Omiya Ardija 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 3 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0; Kyoto Purple Sanga 0 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1; Cerezo Osaka 1 Kawasaki Frontale 3; Avispa Fukuoka 1 Ventforet Kofu 1; Oita Trinita 0 FC Tokyo 1.

JAPAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urawa Reds	34	22	6	6	67	28	72
Kawasaki F	34	20	7	7	84	55	67
Gamba Osaka	34	20	6	8	80	48

THE Knowledge

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Football kidnappings

THE RECENT KIDNAPPING of Maria de Lourdes Silva de Oliveira, sister of Milan striker Ricardo Oliveira, was the latest in a series of abductions of relatives of Brazilian footballers. The 35-year-old was snatched by two hooded men, who had broken into her Sao Paulo home and gagged her husband and son before making their getaway. There was still no news of her release as we went to press.

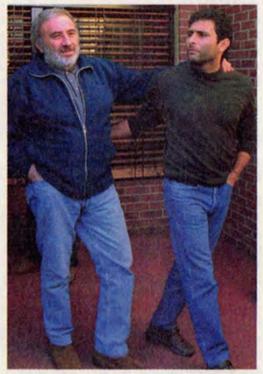
The spate of kidnappings began in November 2004 when Marina da Silva Souza, mother of then Santos forward Robinho, was abducted from her home, also in Sao Paulo, while preparing for a barbecue. Robinho agreed to pay a ransom of about £43,000, ending a 41-day ordeal.

The mothers of Sao Paulo strikers Grafite and Luis Fabiano, Sporting Lisbon defender Rogerio, Corinthians defender Marinho and Santos defender Kleber have all subsequently been kidnapped and released. The sister of Palmeiras defender Michael also suffered the same fate.

Edevair de Souza, the father of Brazil forward Romario, was seized by a Rio de Janeiro gang on the eve of the 1994 World Cup finals. A £4million ransom was demanded, though he was released a few days later with no money having been paid.

Safe...Romario embraces his father

In Argentina, kidnap victims have included Ruben Astrada, father of River Plate player and subsequently coach Leonardo Astrada. In June 2003, Astrada senior was abducted by a gang of six, who had staged a car accident to get at their man. A few days later at a River game Leonardo wore a white T-shirt embossed with a photograph of his father and carrying the words: "Dad, we'll see you soon." Ruben was subsequently freed on the payment of an undisclosed sum.



Family values...Ruben and Leo Astrada

In April 2002, shortly before Juan Roman Riquelme left Boca Juniors for Barcelona, he paid £86,000 for the release of his brother, Cristian, abducted two days earlier.

In August that year, Jorge Milito, the father of now Zaragoza players Gabriel and Diego Milito, was also kidnapped. He was released eight days later after the payment of £60,000.

There have been a number of football-related kidnappings during the conflict in Iraq. In September, Ghanim Khudhair, one of the country's leading players, was abducted near a mosque in the west of Baghdad. His fate is unknown. On October 8, FIFA international referee Hazim Hussein was abducted from outside the city's Al-Shaab stadium, but freed the following day.

Colombian goalkeeper Rene Higuita missed the 1994 World Cup after he was jailed for seven months for his involvement with a drug-cartel kidnapping. Higuita, acting as a go-between for drug barons Pablo Escobar and Carlos Molina, was largely responsible for securing the release of Molina's daughter by delivering the ransom money. He received £35,000 for his services, which broke Colombian law as it is an offence to profit from a kidnapping.

The saddest case concerns Milan's Georgian defender Kakha Kaladze, whose brother Levan was abducted by Chechen rebels in Tbilisi in May 2001 while on his way home from a medical school. He was eventually murdered by his captors, who had demanded a £300,000 ransom.

Ruben Omar Romano, coach of Mexican side Cruz Azul, suffered a 65-day kidnap ordeal last year. He was abducted shortly after leaving a training session when a group of heavily-armed men blocked the road and forced him to stop his car. He was rescued unharmed by police but lost his job three months later.

Grateful...Romano greets Cruz Azul fans

The first known case of a football kidnapping took place in 1963, when Alfredo Di Stefano was abducted in Venezuela while Real Madrid were on a pre-season tour. Di Stefano was taken from his Caracas hotel at gunpoint by revolutionary Paul del Rio and other members of the National Liberation Army Front, who held him for three days before releasing him unharmed.

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